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THE TIMES OF INDIA

INCLUDES 6 PAGES OF BANGALORE TIMES AND *8 PAGES OF EDUCATION TIMES (*CITY AREAS ONLY)

INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

TVK chief Vijay names his party's candidates for all 234 assembly constituencies in Tamil Nadu for April 23 elections, **announcing his electoral debut from two seats**, including Perambur in Chennai, considered a DMK stronghold, P 13

Nepal's former energy minister Deepak Khadka has been arrested in a money laundering investigation, the latest in a series of high-profile detentions that include ex-PM K P Sharma Oli, P 14

Ryan Rickelton and Rohit Sharma slam quickfire 50s to guide **Mumbai Indians (221/4 in 19.1 overs) to victory against Kolkata Knight Riders** (220/4). This was MI's first opening round win since 2012, P 15

World no. 1 Aryna Sabalenka brushes aside Coco Gauff 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 to seal her second straight Miami Open title, becoming the first player to complete the Sunshine Double since Iga Swiatek in 2022, P 16

Can you seal place of worship without notice: HC to UP govt

Allahabad HC has asked UP govt to explain under what authority it can seal a place of worship without prior notice to owners. Hearing a writ petition by Ahsan Ali, the HC posed pointed queries in a March 18 order on the legality of sealing a mosque under construction on private land. P 6

T'gana tables bill against hate crime

Telangana govt tabled a bill Sunday to tackle hate crimes, proposing up to seven years' jail. It also passed a bill stipulating 15% pay cut for staff who fail to care for their parents. P 6

Flight schedule is 12% leaner this summer

The summer flight schedule that came into effect Sunday has 12% less domestic flights than last summer primarily because authorities were conservative in clearing IndiGo projections. P 6

India among worst in maternal deaths

India accounted for about 24,700 of 2.4 lakh maternal deaths globally in 2023, according to a study, with progress slowing in the past eight years after years of rapid decline. P 10

'Animals actively use underpasses'

A study on a section of Delhi–Doon corridor through Shivalik forests found animals actively using underpasses, showing that the passages helped wildlife move around road projects. TNN ▶Munir is in contact, P 14

Pak says it'll host talks between US, Iran 'soon'

No Confirmation Yet From Tehran, Washington

Islamabad: Islamabad will soon host talks between the US and Iran, Pakistan's foreign minister Ishaq Dar said Sunday. He didn't specify whether the talks would be direct or indirect. There was no immediate word from the US or Iran.

"Pakistan is very happy that both Iran and the US have expressed their confidence in Pakistan's facilitation" of the talks, which will happen in the "coming days", Dar said after diplomats from regional countries met in Islamabad.

He said foreign ministers of Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, who met Sunday, endorsed the peace efforts. The ministers are expected to meet again Monday.

Pakistan has emerged as a mediator, having relatively good ties with both Washington and Tehran. Pakistani officials said their public effort follows weeks of quiet diplomacy.

Sunday's four-nation talks were part of efforts to broker an end to the war, with initial discussions focused on proposals to reopen Strait of Hormuz to shipping, sources said.

A source said proposals, including from Egypt, had been forwarded to White House before Sunday's meeting and these included Suez Canal-style fee structures.

Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, dismissed the talks in Pakistan as a "cover". AGENCIES

FULL COVERAGE
P 4, 10, 11, 12 & 14

IRAN VOWS TO STRIKE US CARRIER

- 2 more **Indian-flagged LPG carriers, BW TYR and BW ELM**, carrying 94,000 tonnes, passed through Hormuz en route to India, shipping ministry says
- **Mojtaba Khamenei** thanks Iraqi people for support, Iran's media reports, without saying how message was conveyed
- Iranian Navy vows to strike US aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln to avenge the sinking of IRIS Dena
- Israel's ADAMA, **maker of active ingredients and crop protection materials**, says its plant in southern Israel hit
- **Revolutionary Guards threaten US univs in West Asia**, saying US-Israeli strikes destroyed 2 Iranian varsities

Photo: AFP

This image, verified by AFP staff, appears to show a destroyed US Air Force AWACS aircraft, primarily used for air traffic control, following an Iranian strike at Prince Sultan Airbase in Saudi Arabia that wounded at least 12 US soldiers

US preps for ground assault; waiting for you, says Iran

The "little excursion" into Iran — as described by President Trump — is now edging toward a full-scale invasion, with US officials signaling the start of a broader military campaign, including the potential seizure of Kharg Island — Tehran's oil export hub, **report Chidanand Rajghatta and agencies**.

In leaks over the weekend, US officials revealed preparations for a "final blow" against Iran, with of thousands of troops, including 2,500 Marines aboard amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli (LHA-7) moving into the region.

The administration, however, has stopped short of confirming an invasion.

Iran's speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf accused the US of conveying messages about talks while planning to send troops, and said Tehran was ready to respond. P 14

Govt working for safety of Indians in Gulf, Cong risking their lives: PM

Palakkad/New Delhi: PM Modi on Sunday said while his govt was working to ensure safety of Indians in Gulf nations amid the conflict, Congress, for political gains, was making "dangerous" remarks on the situation, putting Indians living there at "risk".

He also asked his opponents to desist from politicising the crisis, saying there is no place for "self-serving politics" in these challenging times as this is a matter of the interests of 140 crore citizens.

▶To minimise impact, P 10

Portal for Bengal voter appeals live, but no word on offline route

The Election Commission portal for appeals from Bengal voters against exclusion from supplementary lists went live on Sunday, but there was no clarity on how to apply offline —a gap officials admit could disenfranchise large numbers unable to go online, **report Poulami Roy Banerjee** and **Kaushik Pradhan**.

▶ 173 police officers, 83 BDOs shifted in 1 day, P 6

Nineteen judicial tribunals have been set up to hear appeals. Each supplementary list carries a note saying appeals must be filed in a fortnight, but EC is yet to clarify from which date. An EC notification says appeals can be filed offline at DM, SDM or SDO offices, which will upload them "at the earliest".

▶Appeal process, P 13

Bengali actor drowns during beach shooting

Digha/Kolkata: Actor Rahul Arunoday Banerjee (43), a popular face in the Bengali film, OTT and TV industry, drowned Sunday while shooting for a TV series off Talsari beach in Odisha, report **Suman Mandal, Tamaghna Banerjee and Priyanka Dasgupta.** Subhashis Mondal, director of 'Bhole Baba Paar Korega', said, "The shoot had ended. Most of the cast had left, but Rahul-da insisted on a drone shot."

▶'Irreparable loss', P 10

In Census, 'stable' live-in couple to be counted as married

Bharti.Jain @timesofindia.com

New Delhi: A live-in couple staying in a household in a "stable union" shall be treated as a married couple in Census 2027.

In an FAQ reply listed on the census self-enumeration portal — to whether a couple in a live-in relationship will be considered a married couple during self-enumeration or the enumerator's visit to the household — the authorities state: "If they (the couple) consider their relationship as a stable union, they should be treated as a married couple".

Though a clarification on the issue has been publicly offered the first time, possibly as respondents will be self-enumerating, an official involved in previous census exercises said unmarried couples living together and declaring themselves as "married" to the enumerator were recorded as such even in the past.

The number of married couples in a household is among 33 questions in houselisting operations phase of census, spread over a 45-day period.

▶ HC says no law for woman to maintain her in-laws, P 8
▶No docu backing, P 10

Self-enumeration in K'taka from April 1

The first phase of self-enumeration census will begin in Karnataka on April 1 and this exercise will run for 15 days. For the first time, Census 2027 will provide this option allowing respondents to submit their information online. TNN

Videos show inmates using mobiles; 3 cops suspended

Bengaluru: Three undertrials were seen in videos using phones inside highly guarded Central Prison of Bengaluru. In the videos, the trio claimed DGP (Prisons & Correctional Services) Alok Kumar "provided them the devices". During an internal probe, the undertrials admitted that, through the videos, they were trying to derail reforms launched by the DGP to clean up the jail. The probe has denied the charges levelled against the officer.

In the clips, the prisoners mock the officer and also speak of the March 28 match between RCB & SRH. The videos shot reportedly on March 27 went viral Saturday. Around 9am, the clips reached a news portal, prompting cops to launch a probe. Warders Niranjan Kamat, Hanumantappa Hadpad & Shivanand Karlabatti have been suspended. TNN

▶Hidden in pipeline, P 3

Woman tries to smuggle SIM cards into jail, held

A 27-year-old woman was caught attempting to smuggle banned items, including 5G SIM cards and tobacco, into the high-security city central jail by concealing them inside her body. Cops said the woman has been arrested. P 3

Nitish to resign as MLC today, race for Bihar CM post on

New Delhi: Bihar CM Nitish Kumar's expected resignation as a member of the legislative council on Monday will set the stage for the emergence of a new era in the state. BJP is likely to take the driver's seat for the first time in the govt's affairs after playing second fiddle to him since 2005 when he led NDA to its maiden victory.

Nitish was elected to Rajya Sabha on March 16 and the 14-day period during which he has to quit membership of one of the two legislatures ends on Monday. NDA sources said he is likely to quit as CM after taking oath as a member of RS, where his tenure begins from April 10, but political activities for the formation of a govt under a new CM are bound to pick up from Monday. TNN

▶ BJP nominee, P 8

Debt-hit bizman kills mom, sister, injures nephew

A debt-ridden businessman allegedly killed his mother and ailing sister and critically wounded his 12-year-old nephew and himself in Anekal taluk of Bengaluru Rural district Saturday night. Police said Mohan, 26, made a video saying they were unable to bear pressure from lenders and taking the extreme step. Mohan and his nephew were battling for life in hospital, cops said. Their relatives, who live in adjoining houses, heard distressing sounds, broke open the door and saw two women dead and the other two with grievous injuries. P 3

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Civic budgets hinge on tax collection reality

₹4,378-Cr Target Expected To Fund Almost Quarter Of ₹20.2k-Cr Expenditure Plan Of 5 Corpns

Sanjay Murty & Hamsaveni N | TNN

Bengaluru: The five civic corporations have proposed a combined budget outlay of Rs 20,216.5 crore for 2026-27, banking on Rs 4,378.6 crore from property tax collections. However, past trends show consistent shortfalls in meeting these targets, raising questions over how much of the planned spending will actually materialise.

With property tax forming a key revenue pillar, any gap could directly affect project execution, leaving several civic works at risk of delay. Historically, the erstwhile BBMP struggled to meet its targets, often falling well short of projections. It was only in 2024-25 that collections crossed 90% of the target, offering a brief improvement. But the shortfall for the current fiscal is as high as 40% as of March 20.

Data from the 2026-27 budgets shows varying degrees of reliance. In Bengaluru Central, property tax, cess and related receipts account for 41% of the total income, with Rs 780 crore expected purely from them. Bengaluru East has pegged this share at 39%, with the highest standalone property tax target of Rs 1,120.4 crore. Bengaluru West, while relatively less dependent at 23%, still expects Rs 872 crore from the collections.

In Bengaluru North and South, the dependence is moderate but still significant. North estimates Rs 826.3 crore in property tax collections, with tax-related receipts forming 25.6% of its income, while South projects Rs 780 crore with a 28.8% share.

Recovery measures

Recognising the risks, corporations are attempting to widen their revenue base. One of the key measures is the conversion of B-khata properties to A-khata, which is expected to bring more properties into the formal tax net. At the same time, there is a push to use technology for better assessment and enforcement.

Bengaluru East is aiming to mobilise an additional Rs 150 crore through reforms such as a GIS-based property tax system integrated with utility agencies. Another Rs 100 crore is expected through identification of defaulters using AI-driven data systems.

In Bengaluru Central, the authorities are focusing on improving accessibility, with plans to introduce kiosk service centres for self-payment and to train staff in advanced survey techniques such as GPS and total station methods.

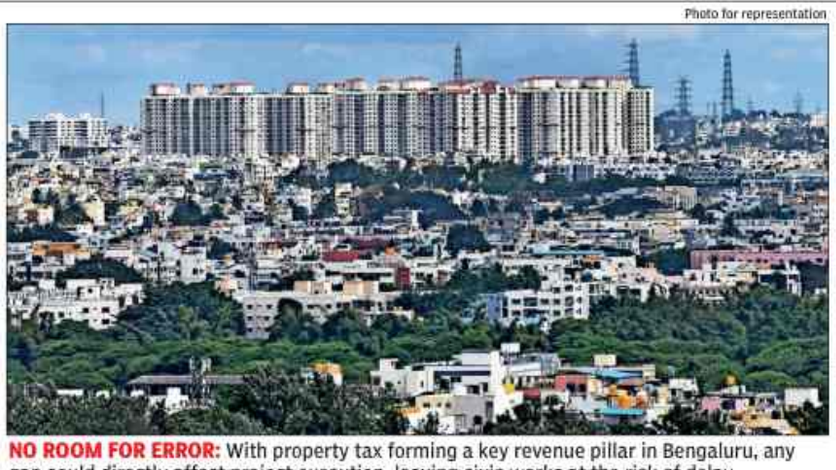
In Bengaluru West, officials plan stricter recovery measures, including auctioning properties of defaulters and strengthening tracking systems. Commissioner KV Rajendra said the focus would be on improving the capacity of the revenue department to ensure timely assessment and collection.

In Bengaluru South, officials remain cautious about recovery prospects, particularly with arrears. "Spending will be aligned with our revenue collection pattern. We are looking at all possible ways to increase our revenue," said KN Ramesh, commissioner of Bengaluru South City Corporation. The corporation expects only about 50% recovery of arrears due to legal hurdles and is instead focusing on expanding the tax base through reassessment, apartment registrations, and B to A-khata conversions. "There is a scope to increase property tax collection by up to 40%," Ramesh added.

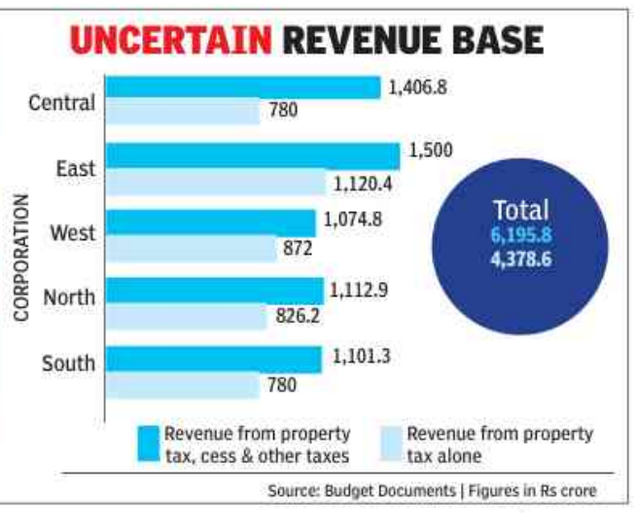
Bengaluru North is also relying on a mix of revenue sources, including Rs 97.1 crore from public sector undertakings and development charges, along with Rs 30.9 crore from tax revisions. Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar pointed out that non-tax revenues, particularly from town planning, have helped sustain finances. However, he cautioned that any delay in property tax collection would directly impact project execution and long-term planning.

Despite these efforts, the underlying concern remains unchanged. Property tax continues to anchor civic finances, and any shortfall could have immediate consequences for infrastructure rollout. The pattern is clear: while budgets project steady growth and ambitious works, their delivery hinges on improving tax realisation.

Photo for representation



NO ROOM FOR ERROR: With property tax forming a key revenue pillar in Bengaluru, any gap could directly affect project execution, leaving civic works at the risk of delay



GBA BUDGET

New structure, same constraints: Modest growth in budget, but limited headroom

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Bengaluru: The combined city-level budget for 2026-27 points to incremental growth rather than any sharp expansion, suggesting limited fiscal space for new big-ticket projects. Revenue receipts are projected at Rs 20,220.6 crore, a marginal rise from Rs 19,930.6 crore in 2025–26, while expenditure is estimated at Rs 20,216.5 crore, up from Rs 19,927.1 crore.

The near parity between income and spending leaves only a small surplus, continuing a long-standing trend in the city's finances. Revenue receipts have risen steadily from Rs 9,291.3 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 10,484.3 crore in 2022-23, Rs 11,158.4 crore in 2023-24, and Rs 12,371.6 crore in 2024-25. While the trajectory is upward, the increments remain modest, indicating that the city's fiscal capacity has not expanded significantly. Expenditure trends mirror this gradual rise, increasing from Rs 9,286.8 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 10,480.9 crore in 2022-23, Rs 11,157.8 crore in 2023-24, and Rs 12,369.5 crore in 2024-25.

The city recorded a surplus of Rs 4.5 crore in 2021-22 and Rs 2.1 crore in 2024-25, with similar small margins in other years. For 2026-27, the surplus is expected to remain just above Rs 4 crore. Such narrow margins leave little buffer to absorb unforeseen expenditure or to fund large new initiatives.

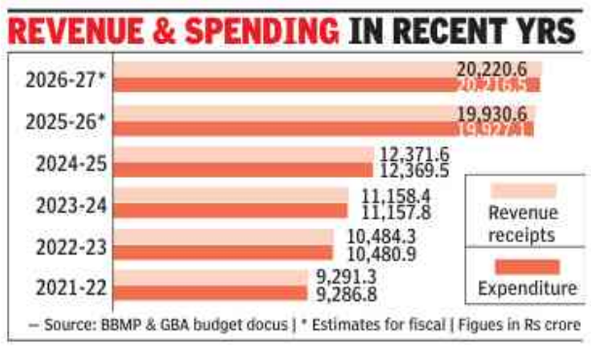
The tight balancing also suggests that most of the available resources are already tied up in committed expenditure. Routine obligations such as salaries, maintenance, and ongoing infrastructure works continue to account for a significant share of spending, limiting flexibility for fresh investments.

Across the five zonal corporations, the same approach is evident. Each has drawn up budgets where expenditure closely tracks revenue, resulting in only marginal surpluses.

Bengaluru West corporation has the largest outlay, with receipts of Rs 4,732.8 crore and expenditure of Rs 4,732.7 crore. North corporation follows with Rs 4,344 crore in receipts and Rs 4,341.2 crore in spending. East corporation has budgeted Rs 3,890 crore in receipts as against Rs 3,889.9 crore in expenditure, while South corporation has projected Rs 3,826.4 crore and Rs 3,825.9 crore, respectively. The Central corporation, with a relatively smaller budget, has estimated receipts of Rs 3,427.3 crore and expenditure of Rs 3,426.6 crore.

Despite it being the first set of budgets after the formation of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), there are no major standalone project announcements across corporations. Officials say infrastructure works will be taken up within existing allocations, with a focus on road development, including ward roads as well as arterial and sub-arterial networks.

Overall, the finances reflect discipline and stability, but also underline a key constraint: with revenues and spending tightly matched year after year, the city has limited room to independently scale up large projects without a significant increase in its resource base.



No surprise fees, but get ready for pricier menus at eateries

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Bengaluru: With the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) restricting all hotels and restaurants from levying default charges — such as LPG fees, gas surcharge, and fuel recovery — some eateries in the city are exploring ways to stay afloat in this time of supply crisis.

The latest move comes amid rising input costs triggered by the ongoing tensions in West Asia, which have disrupted global fuel supply chains and pushed up LPG prices. **TOI** recently reported that several Bengaluru eateries were grappling with erratic cylinder supply and sharp price hikes, forcing many to cut down menus, reduce operating hours, or explore marginal price revisions.

Associations say their members won't levy such charges, suggesting price revisions instead, though some fear the higher prices may deter customers. GK Shetty, of Bangalore Hotels' Association, said: "We've received the [CCPA] circular, and what restaurants are doing is clearly wrong. We are also planning to issue a circular to all our member restaurants, making it clear that such charges cannot be imposed. As menus are decided individually, establishments may consider a reasonable price revision of 5-10% if they are facing losses, or rationalise their menus to manage costs. But charging LPG fees separately is completely unacceptable."

While a few eateries have already hiked the prices of even tea and coffee, others are planning to do so soon enough.

File photo

BURNER WOES

Veerendra Kamat, owner of Kamat Hotels, said, "Over the past month, sales have dropped 30%, forcing many of us to cut down menus and operating hours. Items like dosas, which were earlier available all day, are now limited to only mornings and evenings as they consume a lot of LPG. We cannot absorb the entire burden. While we need around five cylinders a day, we are currently getting only two. Some rationalisation is unavoidable, and we are considering a 5-10% price hike as passing the entire cost on to customers isn't fair either."

Another restaurant owner, from BTM Layout IV Stage, said: "This is not at all fair on small eateries like us. When we hike prices, customers won't come. But when airlines charge for fuel separately, why shouldn't we levy LPG charges? Why are we the only ones being questioned?"

This is not the first time the issue of add-on charges has come under scrutiny. Last month, the Centre issued fresh guidelines prohibiting hotels and restaurants from levying service charges by default, making it clear that such fees must be voluntary. The move was taken following multiple complaints from consumers.

Part of business ops: Consumer authority

The Central Consumer Protection Authority, acting on complaints received via the National Consumer Helpline and media reports, noted that charges are being imposed over and above menu prices and taxes, often to bypass norms on service charges. The authority said these costs must be built into menu pricing and not added separately. Expenses such as fuel, LPG, and power are part of business operations and cannot be passed on as mandatory add-ons. Any such levy, regardless of nomenclature, would be treated as a violation of existing guidelines issued in July 2022, it stated, describing hidden add-ons as unfair trade practice under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

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Man claims he's leaving B'luru after road rage incident with auto driver

Native Of Rajasthan Slams 'Unchecked Violence'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A minor accident on Sarjapur Road on March 25 allegedly escalated into a road rage incident.

A man identified as **Shriraj Bhardwaj**, 31, a native of Rajasthan, has shared details of the incident on X, stating it occurred around 8.20pm when he and his colleague were returning home and encountered an autorickshaw bearing registration number KA-01-AN-4438 allegedly coming on the wrong side. A negligible touch allegedly between his car and the auto and what followed was not an argument; it was a chase.

"The auto driver started aggressively chasing us, trying to block our car multiple times in moving traffic, hitting the vehicle and attempting to open the doors. We chose not to engage and instead tried to reach a safe place. Then it escalated further. Another auto driver joined him. Together, they blocked our path near Sarjapur bridge. One of them picked up a concrete stone and smashed our windshield," he posted. "We somehow managed to reach RGA Tech Park, thinking a gated office space would mean safety. Both drivers followed us inside. Before I could even step out of the car, I was assaulted and repeatedly hit in the face," he posted.

Screengrab

The auto driver allegedly blocked the victims near Sarjapur Road following a minor contact between the two vehicles

The situation calmed down after the main accused fled. When police arrived, the second driver apologised.

Shriraj stated this was not "road rage" but unchecked violence. "Too many people in Bengaluru have had similar experiences but choose to stay silent. Honestly, after this incident, I have made up my mind — I am going to leave Bengaluru and never come back. If this is the state of our roads, then something is seriously broken. Stay alert. And most importantly, don't assume you're safe just because you've done nothing wrong," he said. He shared links to dashcam footage showing the whole turn of events. He also shared a medical report of him undergoing treatment at a hospital.

Bellandur police said, "We have registered an NCR and traced the auto driver. We have been trying to contact the complainant for the last three days to record his statement. However, he informed he is out of the state."

The auto driver alleged his vehicle was damaged and that he was asking them to stop the car to sort out the issue, but they didn't, which led to the incident.

Car on wrong way kills 2 on scooter

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A 29-year-old man, allegedly driving his car in the wrong direction on the one-way Cunningham Road, fatally knocked down two people on a scooter in the early hours of Sunday.

The deceased have been identified as Zubair Ahmed, 42, a resident of Rehmat Nagar in RT Nagar, and his employee Abdul Musaveer Pasha 16, of Frazer Town.

According to a complaint filed by Ahmed's relative, the car driven by Aiyappa AC was involved in the head-on collision in front of the Waqf Board Cross around 2am.

Ahmed was on the way to Pasha's home to drop him off when the accident took place. Aiyappa was driving rashly and negligently under the influence of alcohol, said the complaint.

TOI

The car dragged the scooter for 100 metres, rammed the pavement, and crashed into a pole

After hitting the scooter, the car dragged them for 100 metres, rammed the pavement, and crashed into a pole before coming to a halt. Both Ahmed and Pasha sustained severe injuries. They were taken to Bowring Hospital, where the doctors declared them brought dead.

Aiyappa, a native of Kodagu, is involved in the business of herbal coffee powder, while Zubair runs a lathe workshop near KR Market.

Aiyappa claimed he failed to notice the scooter due to heavy rain. His blood samples have been collected to confirm if he was under the influence of alcohol or any other substances, police said.

2 die as debt-ridden man attacks kin, tries to end life

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

(L-R) Asha, her daughter Varshita, 32, and accused Mohan

Bengaluru: Overwhelmed by mounting business debts and the critical illness of his sister, a 26-year-old man allegedly attacked his family members before attempting to kill himself. Two of them died, while the other two, including the alleged attacker, are battling for life.

The incident occurred at Mallenahalli near Attibele in Anekal taluk Saturday night. The deceased have been identified as Asha, 55, and her daughter Varshita, 32, who both died on the spot. Mayank, 12, and Mohan MR, 26, who were found critically injured, were rushed to a private hospital at Attibele.

According to police, Mohan recorded a video before the incident, stating that they were unable to bear the pressure from lenders and were therefore taking the extreme step. The video was shared with relatives.

Asha and her family were residing in their own house, and their relatives were staying in adjacent buildings. Their relatives and neighbours, who reportedly heard distressing sounds, gathered at the house and found the main door locked from inside. Mohan's paternal uncle, Shekar, peeped through the window and noticed blood on the floor of the hall.

They broke open the door and found Asha and Mayank lying in a pool of blood in the hall, while Varshita was found dead in a wheelchair. Mohan was lying on the floor. The relatives noticed some movement in Mayank and Mohan, and they were rushed to a nearby hospital, while police were alerted. After first aid, Mayank and Mohan were shifted to Narayana Hrudayalaya, where they are undergoing treatment in the ICU.

Chit fund business

Preliminary investigations suggest that Mohan, who was involved in a chit fund and other businesses and was overwhelmed by financial distress, may have attacked Asha, Varshita, and Mayank with a knife and slit their throats before attempting to take his own life in a similar manner.

Relatives alleged that harassment by creditors may have pushed the family to take the extreme step. Both Asha and Varshita were homemakers. Mayank is Varshita's son. Varshita was suffering from a brain tumour for over a year and a half and was reportedly in a critical condition. She was unable to move on her own and confined to a wheelchair. The family had incurred significant debt for her treatment, along with losses in the chit fund business, which may have contributed to the distress.

She had lost her husband a few years ago due to cardiac arrest. Mohan's father also passed away a few years ago. A case of murder and attempt to suicide has been registered at Attibele police station in Bengaluru Rural district.

3 phones wrapped in milk packets, hidden in pipeline

▶ Continued from page 1

The three officers were suspended for dereliction of duty. Action is initiated against the jailer on supervisory duty at the time.

Chief superintendent (prisons) Anshu Kumar and his team recovered three mobile phones wrapped in milk packets and hidden in a pipeline at 3ft depth. Detectors cannot spot the devices or contraband if hidden at that depth, a senior officer said.

The undertrials have been identified as Abhi, an accused in a murder case; Zypsin Daniel; and Sanjeev. Officials said the voice in the clips was that of Zypsin. According to Alok Kumar, the incident appears linked to recent administrative changes aimed at breaking communication network among inmates by shifting them into barracks based on the alphabetical order of their names.

As part of this process, Abhi's elder brother Darshan, also an accused in the murder case, was moved to a quarantine barrack on March 27. Officials believe the videos were recorded soon after this shift.

TOI

ACTIVE NETWORK: The inmates of the prison also had clips of others using mobile phones to watch movies on OTT

Alok Kumar visited the prison after the phones were traced and questioned the accused. The inmates claimed a Nigerian national lodged in the prison two years ago had handed over the phones, sim cards and a charger before his release.

A complaint was filed at Parappana Agrahara police station on March 28 against the three inmates. Parallel disciplinary proceedings have also been initiated against prison staff. Officials detected active network signals in parts of the prison, raising concerns about communication loopholes. A warning has been issued to the telecom provider to take corrective steps to prevent misuse within the facility.

Despite the breach, authorities said reform measures would continue. "Efforts to streamline and improve prison administration will not be deterred by vested interests attempting to disrupt the system," a senior official said.

The prisoners also had clips of other inmates using mobile phones to watch movies on OTT.

Woman caught smuggling sim cards into jail

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A 27-year-old woman was caught attempting to smuggle prohibited items, including sim cards and tobacco, into Central Prison, Parappana Agrahara by concealing them inside her body.

The incident occurred on March 26 around 4pm in the prison's general interview section, where visitors are screened before meeting inmates.

The accused, identified as Ritika Rai, had arrived with a valid visitor pass to meet undertrial prisoner Farhan Khan.

According to prison officials, a woman constable conducting a routine physical check detected suspicious concealment. A detailed search revealed that Rai had hidden three packets containing tobacco-like substances along with three Airtel 5G sim cards inside a private part of her body.

The contraband was seized. Based on a complaint filed by the prison superintendent, a case has been registered against Ritika Rai and Farhan Khan.

Officials said the incident highlights persistent attempts to bypass prison security systems and supply inmates with banned items, particularly communication devices.

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High-stakes bypolls to test govt's grip, BJP revival bid and JD(S) relevance

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Bengaluru: With the budget session of the legislature over, the three major political parties in the state will turn their focus on byelections to Davanagere South and Bagalkot assembly seats, with contests emerging as a challenge despite limited impact on the numerical balance in the Lower House.

Governing Congress, which holds a comfortable majority in the 224-member assembly, faces a credibility test as the results are expected to reflect leadership of chief minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar.

For principal opposition BJP and its state president BY Vijayendra, it offers an opportunity to regain lost ground, while JD(S), led by HD Kumaraswamy, is looking to retain political relevance.

Byelections traditionally favour governing parties and are often influenced by local factors, including cause of vacancy and candidate selection. In 2019, BJP won 12 of 15 assembly bypolls, helping BS Yediyurappa stay on as CM. Subsequent bypolls have seen the governing party retain seats, especially when leveraging sympathy votes.

"In the past, if the deceased MLA had a good track record, the sympathy factor could work in favour of a close releative contesting the polls," said Sandeep Shastri, a psephologist. "These two bypolls were caused by the death of sitting MLAs and Congress has nominated family members of the former MLA in both seats and thus begins with an advantage."

The Davanagere seat has been a Congress stronghold while Bagalkot has see-sawed between Congress and BJP.

"The BJP candidate whom HY Meti defeated in 2023 is contesting again. He has the potential to cause an upset," said Shastri. "So, this seat is likely to see a tougher fight. The sympathy factor could work both ways: It could be sympathy for the candidate who lost the last time, or sympathy for the former MLA whose son is in the race. JD(S) appears content to watch from the sidelines as neither seat is its stronghold."

For Congress, retaining both seats would reinforce its governance narrative and organisational strength ahead of the 2028 assembly polls. A loss, especially in a stronghold like Davanagere, could raise uncomfortable questions.

BJP, which lost the 2023 assembly elections but regained momentum in the Lok Sabha polls, sees the contest as a chance to demonstrate sustained voter support in north and central Karnataka. Even a win in one seat would boost cadre morale and strengthen its claim of a revival.

Prof Harish Ramaswamy, a political analyst, said: "Beyond all the rhetoric, these elections can offer insight into whether hereditary politics is relevant. It's important also to see if parties have alternative perspective and policies for the people as our politics is still very short-sighted even after 79 years of independence."

OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, THREATS

Siddaramaiah (Congress)

- Retaining both seats would reinforce his authority
- A test of governance credibility nearly three years into his term
- Performance will shape political momentum ahead of local body polls, including Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) elections

DK Shivakumar (Congress)

- Success will strengthen his claim for the chief minister's post
- A test of his organisational strength and booth-level management
- It will measure his political influence in north Karnataka

BY Vijayendra (BJP)

- An opportunity to reverse perception of weak bypoll performance
- At least one win would signal continuity in his role as state party chief
- Critical to boost cadre morale and consolidate authority within the party

HD Kumaraswamy (JD-S)

- An NDA victory would weaken DK Shivakumar, who is seen as his direct rival within the Vokkaliga community
- A poor BJP showing could reinforce the perception of a leadership gap, potentially strengthening his claim as the alliance's CM face for the 2028 assembly elections

Mangaluru tile industry on brink as clay shortage bites

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Bengaluru: Tile factories in coastal Karnataka, many dating back to the 1800s and shaped by German missionary influence, are staring at an uncertain future, with restrictions on clay extraction emerging as the biggest challenge.

Data from the department of small scale industries show a sharp decline across districts. In Dakshina Kannada, only eight of 27 established factories remain operational. Uttara Kannada has seen all its 16 factories shut down, while in Udupi, just 10 of the 32 units continue to function.

Small scale industries minister Sharanabasappa Darshanapur told the legislative council earlier this week that there are no incentives to revive existing units. He was responding to BJP's Pratap Simha Nayak, who flagged the collapse of the industry.

Members of families running legacy units said German missionaries introduced tile-making technology to generate employment for converts. A descendant of the 1865 Basel tile factory said the Great Depression of 1929 led to the collapse of the first unit in Mangaluru.

TOI

DYING OUT: In Dakshina Kannada, only eight of 27 established factories remain operational

"Tiles were exported to Europe, but payment never arrived," the family member said, adding that the factory later changed hands.

Historians point to the Basel Mission's role in industrialising the region. "It established a commission in 1854 to set up industries," said Dr Peter Wilson Prabhakar, former principal, Vivekananda College, Puttur. "The first tile factory began operations in Jeppu, Mangaluru, in 1865 under the supervision of missionary George Plebst."

George Albuquerque Pai, president, Western India Tile Manufacturers Association, said, "Clay in Mangaluru was good. Three years after them, my great-grandfather started the factory in 1868. Mangaluru once had 35 tile factories."

While some units modernised over time, adding products such as jaalis and floor tiles, many shut down.

Industry representatives say sourcing clay remains the core issue. "Even though we source it from private land, there are many restrictions. The govt can earn royalty; it must hear our solutions. An old notification allowed lumpsum payment on the basis of production; for instance, we could explore that," Pai said.

Muslims in Cong jostle to catch the eye

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Bengaluru: The bypoll to Davanagere South assembly seat has sparked a contest among Congress' Muslim members, to emerge as the face of the community while also sparking divisions.

Housing minister BZ Zameer Khan, arguably the most prominent minority member, is miffed over the party's decision to pick Samarth Shamanur, grandson of late MLA Shamanur Shivashankarappa. Khan was keen on the ticket going to a Muslim since the community accounts for 40% of 2.3 lakh electorate.

While Khan and a section of Muslims including Naseer Ahmed, CM Siddaramaiah's political secretary, and K Abdul Jabbar, MLC, chose to voice their angst, others like Saleem Ahmed, Congress' chief whip in legislative council, and Rizwan Arshad, Shivajinagar MLA, stepped in to assume leadership roles.

TOI

TAKING CHARGE: Saleem Ahmed with Sadaiq Pailwan

Saleem Ahmed and Arshad initially also backed a Muslim candidate, but they took the responsibility of pacifying the community once Samarth was picked. They got rebel candidate and local heavyweight Sadiq Pailwan to retire which has given them an edge with brass. It brightens their prospects of becoming ministers should a cabinet rejig happen.

"Winning is a collective responsibility," said Saleem Ahmed. "We will win as the Muslim community will continue to support Congress."

Khan, meanwhile, has left for Keralam to campaign in the assembly polls there. His conspicuous absence in Davanagere South has triggered speculations of a fallout. Naseer Ahmed is in Bagalkot, the other assembly seat where elections will be held on April 9, and is expected to join Siddaramaiah in campaigning on Monday.

"A separate team is in charge of Davanagere South," said Naseer Ahmed. "I may campaign there at a later stage. Yes, we wanted the party ticket for our community, but it is the party's decision."

If Khan's and Naseer Ahmed's disgruntlement translates into votes being divided and a setback for Congress, it could play into Saleem Ahmed's and Arshad's hands

"It is too early to write off Zameer Khan," said Priyank Kharge, RDPR minister. "There is still time for him to join the campaign. Everyone in Congress has the right to seek the party ticket but the choice ultimately rests with party brass one should understand this."

BJP candidate's bro campaigns for Cong

Bagalkot: The Bagalkot bypoll contest took a curious turn on Sunday with Mallikarjun Charantimath, brother of BJP candidate Veeranna Charantimath, campaigning for Congress candidate Umesh Meti.

Mallikarjun had filed his nomination as a BJP rebel but is now backing Congress.

At a rally Sunday, he said Congress' guarantee schemes have helped the poor. "BJP is criticising guarantees as freebies, but they have waived Rs 11 lakh crore of corporate loans," Mallikarjun said. "Many countries provide free education, food, healthcare and other facilities in the name of universal basic income. Congress calls it guarantees. It has helped increase spending capacity of the poor."

Recalling late MLA HY Meti, he called him a "visionary". "People shouldn't forget his 30-40 years of contribution," he said. TNN

Eye on taxes? 'Pauti khata' drive put on fast track

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The govt has issued fresh guidelines to simplify and speed up transfer of land ownership to legal heirs under the pauti khata system, launching a special drive through the e-Pauti platform.

Pauti khata is a temporary record and is mainly used to collect property tax. Officials say delays in securing it had left families struggling to get loans, compensation during natural calamities and benefits under schemes like PM-Kisan. The new rules aim to remove procedural hurdles and make the process easier.

Under the revised system, village administrative officers can now process mutation even if key documents such as death certificates or family trees are not immediately available. They have been directed to collect these records from Atalji Janasnehi centres (AJKS) and upload them to the e-Pauti system.

If a family tree is unavailable, applicants can submit a notarised affidavit and apply through AJKS to obtain one. In the absence of a death certificate, officials can verify details using Aadhaar and ration card, conduct a mahazar, and collect affidavits from family members. A video record of this verification must be uploaded.

Even if Aadhaar or ration card details are missing, mutation can proceed based on village-level inquiry and affidavits. To encourage applications, the govt has waived the Rs 35 mutation fee under e-Pauti. A 15-day window has been fixed for objections. If no disputes are raised, the transfer is completed.

If objections arise, the case is moved to the RC-CMS system and must be resolved by the tahsildar within a month. Ownership transfer is faster if all legal heirs complete Aadhaar e-KYC and give consent. However, if even one heir refuses, the case is treated as a dispute and sent for inquiry. In such instances, a note of disagreement is added to records.

The guidelines also allow joint entry of heirs' names if families agree on sharing the land. Even without formal partition documents, mutation can go ahead based on mutual consent.

SHORT TAKES

Shobha hits out at policy change on Hindi language

Union minister Shobha Karandlaje criticised the change in the state govt's third language policy, insisting "people willingly learn Hindi" and that it "does not amount to imposing the language" on students. "Congress introduced a policy on Hindi during the examination season while keeping quiet throughout the year, ignoring the three-language policy," Karandlaje said. "This is only to score political brownie points. BJP supports a policy that encourages people to learn all languages."

ANI

HOPE & TRUST: Deputy CM DK Shivakumar at Kamakhya temple, Guwahati, Sunday

Murmu set to visit Tumakuru's Siddaganga Mutt

President Droupadi Murmu is scheduled to travel to Siddaganga Mutt Wednesday, a visit which its pontiff Siddalinga Swami described as "a moment of pride" for Tumakuru. Murmu will participate in the 119th birth anniversary celebrations of Shivakumara Swamiji, who passed away at the age of 111 on Jan 21, 2019. Several dignitaries, including governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot, Union ministers Pralhad Joshi and V Somanna and Karnataka minister Laxmi Hebbalkar are expected to attend.

10 more tool & training centres to meet soaring demand

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Bengaluru: To meet rising demand for technical education, the skill development department has announced plans to establish 10 new tool and training centres (GTTCs), at an estimated Rs 60cr each.

GTTCs provides training, research and development, production, and consultancy services to support industrial growth and emerging sectors. Beginning with one in Bengaluru, GTTCs have grown to 31 across the state. The proposed additions will take the total number to 41.

Official data shows admissions across seven specialised diploma courses have shown a steady rise. In 2023-24, total intake stood at 2,669 seats, with 3,100 students enrolling. The following year, intake increased to 5,390 seats, accommodating 3,687 admissions. By 2025-26, intake reached 6,050 seats, with 5,729 students enrolling. An official said the difference in intake and admissions is due to "mismatch of expectations vs curriculum, financial and personal constraints, awareness, and academic preparedness".

Over the past three years, Diploma in Tool & Die Making recorded the highest enrolment, with 5,327 students. In contrast, automation and robotics — offered across six centres — saw the lowest enrolment at 514 students.

Most students are aged between 14 and 18, typically having completed Class 10 or 12. Traditional courses like diploma in tool & die making continue to attract over 1,000 students annually, but newer streams like artificial intelligence and machine learning, offered in seven centres, are witnessing growing interest.

Officials attribute the rising demand to industry needs and job opportunities. An official said: "We receive many requests from constituencies for new centres since electronics fabs (Foxconn, HP), EV clusters, aerospace expansions (HAL, BEL), and MSME tooling upgrades are driving job creation. These courses offer 100% placement."

Neeti Sharma, CEO, TeamLease Digital, said: "With the expansion of manufacturing, semiconductor, EV, and green energy sectors, the curriculum must evolve to prepare students for tomorrow's industries, not just today's. Awareness campaigns and student counselling are crucial to ensure students understand opportunities, which will enhance employment prospects. Faculty engagement, and updated curricula will help build a skilled, ready workforce."

Nikita Bengani, director, Youth Program at Quest Alliance, said: "Awareness and accessibility remain key barriers, especially for disadvantaged youth who are often unaware of career opportunities technical training offers. Distance, living costs, and lack of hostel or transport facilities also discourage enrolment, while safety and family confidence influence young women's participation. Skilled trainers, effective mentorship, and modern learning environments are also crucial to keeping students engaged and ensuring successful outcomes."

Besides AI-driven robotics and human-machine interfaces, the department plans to introduce courses in chip testing, photonics assembly, and smart factory operations. Plans are also underway to boost admissions through industry collaborations, scholarships, and student support schemes.

Picture for representation

POPULAR CHOICE

Course*	Intake	Admissions
Tool & die making	5,610	5,327
Precision manufacturing	1,830	1,320
Mechatronics	2,730	2,125
AI & Machine learning	900	694
Electrical & electronics	1,560	1,106
Automation & robotics	720	514
Electronics & communication	1,190	999
Total	14,540	12,085

*All diploma | From 2023-24 to 2025-26 | Source: Skill development department

Fresh SoPs: Hostels, govt canteens to get LPG refills on priority

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: In line with Union govt directives to regulate commercial use of LPG amid the West Asia crisis, the state govt Sunday issued a set of standard operating procedures (SOPs) to manage supply and distribution.

Under new guidelines, all commercial establishments must register for piped natural gas (PNG) connections with their respective distribution entities within seven days "to be considered under the allocation framework".

The state has categorised commercial LPG distribution into four priority sectors, which district administrations must follow. The top priority group includes essential institutions such as educational institutions, student hostels, and hospitals; second priority includes govt and public sector units, as well as canteens at airports, railway stations, and bus terminals.

100% quota to first 2 priorities

The third priority category — closely watched due to its scale — covers restaurants, dhabas, hotels, industrial canteens, food processing units, KMF (Nandini) dairies, Indira Canteens, community kitchens, paying guest accommodations, corporate canteens, and sports facilities. The fourth category includes labour-intensive and industrial sectors such as steel, automobile, textile, dye, chemical, and plastics industries, along with seed processing, agriculture and allied sectors, pharmaceuticals, fisheries, zoological parks, poultry, and sericulture.

The SOP states the first two priority sectors will receive 100% of their quota, while supply to the third category will be considered after meeting needs of higher-priority segments.

Officials said the Centre has increased Karnataka's allocation by 8%, bringing total availability for commercial purposes to 68%. The state's average monthly consumption over the past three months has been around 25,000 tonnes, while current availability stands at 18,494 tonnes. On a daily basis, Karnataka has approximately 29,463 commercial LPG cylinders available. In contrast, average consumption during normal times is about 850 tonnes/day or about 44,000 cylinders (19kg capacity).

As per guidelines from the ministry of petroleum and natural gas, stakeholders are expected to receive 578 tonnes of commercial LPG and 38.5 tonnes of auto LPG per day, totalling 616.5 tonnes. Auto LPG supply will continue as per existing allocations. "The situation in the state is expected to improve significantly," said KH Muniyappa, food and civil supplies minister.

Meanwhile, authorities have flagged black marketing, warning of legal action and licence cancellation. District-level monitoring committees, headed by deputy commissioners, have been tasked with overseeing distribution.

File photo

COMMERCIAL LPG CONSUMPTION

Demand in tonnes

Dec 2025	27,185
Jan 2026	25,677
Feb 2026	23,683
Avg monthly consumption	25,525

*Source : Public sector oil marketing companies

TONNE PER DAY TO BE RELEASED BY STATE

Commercial LPG	Auto LPG
616.5 (29,463 cylinders)	56.7 (2,984 cylinders)

The state has categorised commercial LPG distribution into four priority sectors, which districts must follow

DEMAND FOR AUTO LPG SKYROCKETS

The food and civil supplies department said public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) dispensed an average 64.9 tonnes of auto LPG a day, an increase from 56.7 tonnes prior to the conflict. OMCs — IOCL, BPCL and HPCL — supply auto LPG at Rs 77.7 per litre.

Fans lose mobile phones at IPL match

Bengaluru: A night of cricketing excitement ended on a bitter note for a few fans after they lost their mobile phones. Around eight missing mobile phone cases have been reported to Cubbon Park police.

A senior officer said three were found. A few persons misplaced their phones while exiting the stadium. One phone was found near the stairs, and another near a seat.

A few phones may have been stolen. According to preliminary information to police on the spot, around 12 phones may have gone missing during the opening match between RCB and SRH on Saturday. Police said clarity on the total number of missing phones will emerge in a couple of days.

Most incidents have been reported near Gate No 3. Police are analysing CCTV footage. TNN

New bridges to boost links with Kerala

Karnataka plans to construct 2-3 bridges, including one at Poonadka in Vitla of Mangaluru district, to improve connectivity with Kerala, according to public works department minister Satish Jarkiholi.

After inspecting the proposed Poonadka site Sunday, he said the department would give more emphasis for the construction of interstate bridges, including footbridges. Poonadka bridge is at least a 50-year-old demand. A final decision will be taken after evaluation. Karnataka will bear the cost, he added. "Several works under State Highway Development Programme are in progress. Tenders will be invited in April, he said. TNN

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Court steps in after senior citizen alleges passport seizure and usury

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The order is expected to boost enforcement of anti-usury laws and ensure quick police response to allegations of high interest and coercive recovery practices

Bengaluru: The high court has directed Bengaluru police to promptly examine and act on a complaint filed by a senior citizen alleging illegal money-lending practices and coercive recovery methods, underscoring the stricter provisions under the Karnataka Prohibition of Charging Exorbitant Interest Act-2004.

Justice Sachin Shankar Magadum passed the order while allowing a petition filed by a Bengaluru resident. The petitioner had submitted complaints on Dec 12, 2025 to the police commissioner and on Feb 27, 2026 to the assistant commissioner of police (CCB), alleging that an individual with whom he had financial dealings, had illegally retained his passport.

The court noted that the complaint prima facie disclosed a cognisable offence under the amended Section 4 of the Act, which deals with charging exorbitant interest and coercive recovery practices.

Referring to the enhanced penal provisions, Justice Magadum observed that the offence now carries a punishment of up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 5 lakh.

"When the complaint discloses ingredients attracting a penal provision punishable with imprisonment extending up to 10 years, the jurisdictional police officers cannot remain passive or merely contemplate a preliminary inquiry," the judge said. He added that criminal procedure mandates the registration of a case once information revealing a cognisable offence is received.

The court took note of the investigating officer's apparent hesitation to proceed beyond a preliminary inquiry, possibly based on the earlier version of the law, which prescribed a maximum punishment of three years. However, the amendment significantly increased the severity of punishment, thereby elevating such offences to the category of grave cognisable crimes requiring immediate police intervention.

Justice Magadum stressed that any person contravening the provisions of the Act, or resorting to harassment or coercion to recover loans, would attract stringent penalties.

The court made it clear that in light of the amended provisions, police could not delay action by limiting the matter to a preliminary inquiry. Instead, they were required to register a first information report.

Four of a family travelling to Delhi by train go missing

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TOI
Sushma and with two children

Sushma does not have a phone due to which her husband Sumit is unable to contact her. Sumit has sought help from railway min Ashwini Vaishnaw

Bengaluru: Two women and as many children travelling to Delhi from Bengaluru by a train have been reported missing.

Sushma, her sister-in-law and the former's two children — Anaya and Pradyumn — left for Delhi onboard 12627 Karnataka Express at 7.20pm Wednesday. As the train takes 36-38 hours to complete the journey, the family was expected to reach Delhi by around 9am Friday. However, the family is yet to reach their home in Delhi, according to Sushma's husband Sumit.

In a desperate attempt, Sumit took to X Sunday, seeking help from railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. According to Railway Protection Force (RPF). Sumit stated his wife and the three others had boarded the train at the KSR railway station in Bengaluru.

Sumit told RPF that Sushma does not have a mobile phone due to which he was unable to contact her. Thursday, he visited RPF's office to check the CCTV footage, in which Sushma was spotted. Police assume the man got worried after being unable to contact his sister, who would have a phone.

RPF maintained that the investigation is in progress and no information has been ascertained as of Sunday. "All en route stations have already been advised to check for the missing family," a senior RPF officer told **TOI**.

A Sunday to Remember as FUN FILLS STREET

Pics: Chethan Shivakumar

BRIGHT & EARLY Happy Streets returned at Bhartiya City Sunday morning with yoga, Zumba, folk performances, and games, drawing enthusiastic crowds and showcasing the spirit of community

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After a two-month break, Happy Streets took over Bhartiya City Sunday.

In the debut edition at the township, the roads were filled with joy and energy from locals and residents of nearby neighbourhoods. The show of community spirit was surprising to some who popped in during their jog/walk through the community's Central Park. It even generated interest from pet parents.

BHIMA presents HAPPY streets — OUR ROADS. OUR WAY.

The stage programme kicked off with a yoga and pranayama demonstration by Sarvebhavanthu Sukhinah Yoga, setting a calm and balanced tone. The intensity was later elevated with a Zumba workout and fitness dance session by Swingers Dance Inc, with participants across age groups moving to the rhythm.

Sunday's edition also featured a strong performance of traditional art forms, which had the audience vibing in excitement. Dollu Kunitha, a traditional art form of Karnataka, grabbed attention, bringing the young and the old together. The highlight of the morning was a series of vibrant, diverse dance performances by Thaalalaya Dance Academy, Divine Souls Dance Studio, and Stylish Chinna's Dance Studio, which displayed moves across genres.

For the young ones, the event had several engaging activities like painting, tug of war, and cricket with tennis balls.

Happy Streets is presented by Bhima Jewellers, and its creativity partners include NeeRav Arts Village, Global Art Thanisandra, and From Mug to Mic.

"I was pretty happy with the event here in Bhartiya City as it showed the traditional way of teaching as well. There were postcard events along with snakes and ladders, so the kids were pretty excited. My kids didn't want to go back home. On Sunday, kids get a free day, they are otherwise sleeping at home or watching something, so it is good to see them out playing

Kaushal Kakkar & daughter Anaisha | FROM BHARTIYA CITY

"This event is amazing, my daughter loves attending this. A few years back, I attended an edition in Malleswaram. I stay in Horamavu. Kids enjoy these kinds of open spaces a lot. My daughter is passionate about art and here, she really liked the tattoo counter

Diganta Bhattacharya & daughter Mandana | FROM HORAMAVU

"The weather was nice early in the morning and it all looked very beautiful, we enjoyed it. I liked watching them dance. Everyone was here, all kinds of people. Senior citizens like me can sit near the mall and spend time as most people live alone. I also liked that they were providing complimentary tea and cookies to everyone participating

Shashi Tarika | FROM BHARTIYA CITY

Fatal accident: HC raises payout to ₹12L

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The court cited an SC judgment which said compensation under future prospects is payable even in those cases where the deceased is not employed

Bengaluru: The high court has awarded higher compensation of Rs 12 lakh to the family of a daily wage worker from Kushalnagar, who was killed in an accident about 11 years ago, enhancing it from the Rs 9.4 lakh fixed by a tribunal.

The accident occurred on May 30, 2015 when Nanjundaswamy was walking by the side of a road. As an SUV hit him, he suffered injuries and was taken to Kushalnagar Govt Hospital and thereafter shifted to JSS Hospital, Mysuru, where he was treated as an in-patient and discharged. In spite of taking follow-up treatment, Nanjundaswamy succumbed to the injuries on June 12, 2015.

A claim petition was filed by the parents of the deceased, seeking compensation of Rs 15.8 lakh. On Sept 21, 2017, the tribunal at Madikeri awarded the family Rs 9.4 lakh with a 9% interest.

Both the claimants and the insurer — ICICI Lombard — challenged the order. The insurance firm made three contentions. Firstly, the insured vehicle was not involved in the accident. Secondly, the deduction was wrongly taken as 1/3rd by the tribunal when the deceased was a bachelor and was survived only by his parents. Lastly, a challenge was made to the interest awarded at 9% per annum, terming it to be too high. The claimants, on the other hand, challenged the non-grant of future prospects while seeking higher compensation.

In his recent judgment, Justice Tara Vitasta Ganju noted that the registration number of the vehicle involved in the accident was mentioned in the chargesheet and that the insurer had never raised the contention of any fraud. The judge pointed out that the Supreme Court has clearly spelt out the compensation under future prospects payable even in those cases where the deceased was not employed.

Partly allowing the appeal filed by the claimants and simultaneously dismissing the appeal filed by the insurer, the judge noted that the family members of the deceased are entitled to total compensation of Rs 12 lakh along with interest at the rate of 6% per annum.

B'luru's research institute wins Modi's praise

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Located on Kanakapura Road off Ravgodlu, Prayoga Institute of Education Research and its flagship Anveshana programme found mention during the 132nd episode of Mann Ki Baat Sunday, with Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** praising its efforts to make scientific research accessible to school students.

MANN KI BAAT

Modi noted that deeper engagement leads to better understanding. He said Prayoga's Anveshana programme enables students from Classes 9 to 12 to work in multiple subjects such as chemistry, earth sciences and wellness, offering hands-on exposure to research.

Modi said: "Practice makes a man perfect. More practice leads to more knowledge... During Pariksha Pe Charcha, some students shared that while they like science, they also have a sense of fear around it. In this context, Prayoga's initiative is commendable, as it helps students connect with science and provides opportunities for them to learn practically. When students do something on their own, curiosity develops naturally. Who knows, someone from such initiatives could go on to become a great scientist in the future."

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Highway crash: Car, truck go up in flames

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

The car heading towards Kolar rammed the container truck that was taking a U-turn. The car was reportedly speeding, and the driver failed to control it

Bengaluru: A collision between a car and a container truck on a national highway near Hoskote triggered a dramatic blaze early Sunday, leaving both vehicles gutted and two persons injured.

The incident occurred around 2am near Halasahalli village in Hoskote taluk of Bengaluru Rural district. According to police, a Maruti Swift Dzire heading towards Kolar rammed into a container truck that was taking a U-turn. The car was reportedly overspeeding, and the driver failed to control it, hitting the truck near its fuel tank.

NEAR HOSKOTE

The impact was so severe that both vehicles caught fire almost instantly and were engulfed in flames within moments.

Eyewitnesses described chaotic scenes as the vehicles burned intensely. The container truck was completely charred, and the goods it was carrying — including napkins, detergents, and other items — were reduced to ashes.

Fire and emergency services personnel, along with police and local residents, rushed to the spot and managed to rescue the car's occupants in the early stages of the fire, averting a major tragedy.

The injured, identified as Manjunath, 45, and Gopi, 48 were shifted to a private hospital in Hoskote and are out of danger. Three other occupants of the car escaped unhurt. The truck driver also survived, having managed to get out immediately after the collision.

A senior officer said three fire tenders were pressed into service to douse the flames. The incident caused a traffic jam for nearly three hours. The charred vehicles were later removed using cranes. Hoskote traffic police have registered a case and are investigating.

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TIMES NATION

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2026

J&K L-G MANOJ SINHA SAYS PEACE & PROSPERITY HAVE MADE THE UT DESTINATION FOR WORLD-CLASS EVENTS

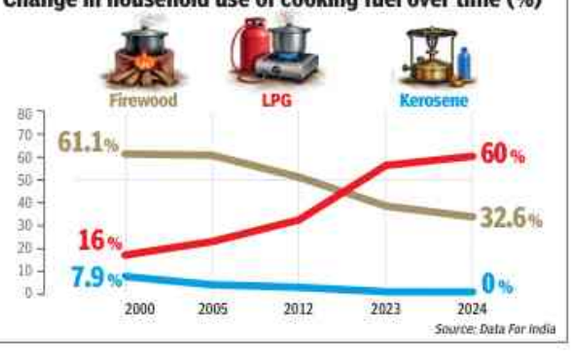
JAIRAM RAMESH TAKES SWIPE AT CENTRE FOR CLAIMING CREDIT FOR GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD CONSERVATION

STATOISTICS A slice of life in numbers

How kerosene vanished as cooking fuel, and LPG took off

LPG use has surged from 16% of households in 2000 to over 60% in 2024, overtaking firewood in the late 2010s as India steadily shifts toward cleaner cooking fuels

Change in household use of cooking fuel over time (%)



Source: Data For India

Domestic flights cut by 3,000 this summer

After Dec Chaos, DGCA Tightens IndiGo Projections

Saurabh.Sinha
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Once bitten, twice shy. The summer schedule that came into effect from Sunday has about 12% less domestic flights than last summer, primarily because aviation authorities were conservative in clearing IndiGo projections.

While the airline projected getting a plane every week, the authorities asked the country's largest carrier to file for flights when it gets more planes and can show it has the wherewithal, including pilot numbers, for the same. "We did not want a repeat of what happened last Dec and hence were extra cautious this time," said a person in the know.

Almost all airlines filed reduced domestic flights for this summer compared with last year. "We will keep revising the number as and when they can show the ability to operate more flights," the person added. Last summer, DGCA had approved a schedule for 25,610 weekly domestic flights. This time, the number is expected to be lower by about 3,000 or 12%. IndiGo's schedule was for 14,158 weekly domestic flights last summer.

The aviation ministry is, however, aware that the elephant in the room is operating costs for airlines in terms of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) pricing and a crashing rupee that will determine fares. Setting fares very high will mean demand taking a hit and fewer flights being required. Financially weak airlines will also find it hard to operate at these cost levels. The monthly ATF price revision for April is expected to see a significant hike.

Getty Images

Authorities asked IndiGo to file for flights when it gets more planes

Seat-picking charge relief from April 20

Come April 20, airlines will need to offer at least 60% seats on a flight without any selection charge. Passengers travelling on the same PNR should be allotted seats close to one another, DGCA has said, while asking airlines to have a transparent seat allocation policy. TNN

Absence of Gulf carriers opens up opportunities

New Delhi: Big Gulf airlines not being in the scene now is being seen as an "opportunity" for Indian carriers to fly between India and the rest of the world via hubs such as Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi. "Passengers flying from Varanasi to New York via Delhi will soon be able to get immigration and customs done at Varanasi itself," an airline executive said. The challenge here is the relatively lower number of wide body aircraft with Indian carriers, with only Air India having about 60 of them and IndiGo operating six wet leased. TNN

Man's genitals chopped off in Maha road rage

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: Five to six men thrashed a mini-pickup driver (32) and severed his genitals during a road rage incident in Maharashtra's Sambhajinagar Saturday, reports **Mohammed Akhef**.

Police said the pickup van of the man and his friend suffered a snag and stopped at a sharp turn. "A speeding van almost crashed into it and its occupants started arguing with the man." The man ran into a field and his friend apologised to the van occupants, who helped him restart the pickup. After he left, the men tracked the man and assaulted him, police said. Some villagers saw him and called an ambulance.

HACK OF THE DAY CHECK IF A NUMBER OR WEBSITE IS ALREADY FLAGGED

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WHAT TO DO: Use the cybercrime suspect-check feature before sending money, clicking links, or sharing personal information

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4. **Review** whether the entry has been flagged as suspicious or linked to complaints
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CAREFUL: A clean result does not guarantee safety. Scammers keep changing numbers and domains, so use this as a warning signal, not a final guarantee

SCAN FOR MORE

Hacks are based on verified public sources. Readers are advised to follow official websites & updated rules

HC to UP govt: Can you seal place of worship without giving notice?

Prayagraj: Allahabad high court has asked Uttar Pradesh govt to explain under what authority it can seal a place of worship without prior notice or an opportunity of hearing to owners, **reports Rajesh Kumar Pandey**.

Hearing a writ petition by Muzaffarnagar resident Ahsan Ali, Justices Atul Sreedharan and Siddharth Nandan posed pointed queries in a March 18 order on the legality of sealing a mosque under construction on private land. It also sought clarity on whether owners require state permission to carry out construction within a place of worship on their own land.

Ali said he lawfully purchased the plot in 2019 from Praveen Kumar Jain through a registered sale deed and later constructed a mosque. Authorities sealed the structure after he began raising a boundary wall, claiming construction was illegal and lacked prior permission. The petitioner told the court no notice was issued and no hearing granted before action.

EC shifts 173 Bengal cops, 83 BDOs in a day

Kolkata: Election Commission transferred 173 police officers, including 142 SHOs, and 83 Block Development Officers (BDOs) who also serve as assistant returning officers in Bengal on Sunday in one of its largest single-day mass reshuffles.

The transfers span both BJP-dominated and governing party Trinamool Congress-held territories.

In Kolkata, STF inspector Soumitra Basu has been shifted as Bhowanipore SHO, Nirupam Nath as Park Street officer in-charge (OC), and Susanta Mondal as Jorasanko OC. Officials posted at Alipore, Garden Reach, Entally, Gariahat, Bowbazar and New Market police stations have also been moved.

Bengal chief election officer (CEO) Manoj Agarwal had proposed the transfer of 84 BDOs, but EC approved 83, rejecting the proposed transfer of Suri-I BDO. The transfers come amid Calcutta HC hearings on a PIL challenging the earlier mass transfer of 60 senior IAS and IPS officers, including the chief secretary, the home secretary and the DGP.

The matter is scheduled for hearing on Monday. TNN

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tender & notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that under the instructions of our client, we are investigating and verifying the title of (i) **Equinox India Infraestate Limited (earlier known as Indiabulls Infraestate Limited)** having its registered office at Office no 202, 2nd Floor, A-18, Rama House, Middle Circle, Connaught Place, New Delhi - 110001 and (ii) **Spero Properties and Services Private Limited** having its registered office at One World Center, Tower 2A, 4th Floor, Senapati Bapat Marg, Mumbai - 400013 ("**Owners/Promoters**") with respect to the premises more particularly described in the **Schedule** hereunder written ("**Premises**"), as the Owners/Promoters have agreed to sell and transfer the said Premises to our client on ownership basis with a clear and marketable title, free from any and all encumbrances and claims.

All persons/entities including inter alia any bank and / or financial institution and / or authority having any right, title, benefit, interest, share, claim or demand of whatsoever nature in respect of the Premises or any part/s thereof, by way of sale, transfer, exchange, assignment, mortgage, charge, gift, trust, covenant, monument, inheritance, claim, possession, lease, sub-lease, license, lien, maintenance, easement, devise, bequest, encumbrance, family arrangement/ settlement, decree or order of any Court of Law, contracts/ agreements, development rights or otherwise howsoever are hereby requested to make the same known in writing along with notarially certified true copies of documentary proof to the undersigned at its office, within **14 (fourteen) days** from the date of publication hereof, failing which such right, title, benefit, interest, share, claim and/or demand, if any, shall be deemed to have been waived and/or abandoned and no such claim will be deemed to exist.

Schedule

(Description of the said Premises)

Residential unit being Apartment No.S-7002 admeasuring about 461.62 square meters of carpet area equivalent to 4968.88 square feet of carpet area or thereabouts, Exclusive Area admeasuring about 50.53 square meters equivalent to 543.90 square feet (which includes balcony) aggregating to net area of 512.15 square meters equivalent to 5512.78 square feet on the 70th floor in the South Wing of the Building known as "Embassy Citadel" (under construction) together with 4 (four) Car Parking Space(s) in the said Building to be constructed on the lands bearing Cadastral Survey No.128 admeasuring 4191.50 square meters, Cadastral Survey No.129 admeasuring 1337.79 square meters and Cadastral Survey No.130 admeasuring 2280.95 square meters of thereabouts of Lower Parel Division, within the city of Mumbai, in the Registration District and Sub-District of Mumbai and Mumbai Suburban and situated at Dr. E. Moses Road, Parel, Mumbai - 400 018.

Dated this **30th** day of **March, 2026**

For AAK Legal
Sd/-
Ms. Aziza Khatri
AAK Legal
Advocates & Solicitors
Sir Vithaldas Chambers, 507-509, 5th Floor, 16, Mumbai Samachar Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001
Email:- aziza@aaklegal.in

PUBLIC NOTICE

The General Public are hereby notified that, my clients have agreed to purchase the Schedule property from its owners: **Y.S.JYOTHIDEVI W/o Late Shashikumar.M and her children Sri.M.S.AJAYPRASAD and Sri.M.S.ABHAYACHANDRA**, residing at: No.115/10, Sharadhi, 15th Cross Road, Opp.Poornima Clinic, Vyalikaval, Bengaluru-560 003.

Apart from the said owners, if any other person/s have any manner of right, title and or interest or claim or charge or lien over the Schedule property or otherwise have any lawful objection/s for sale of the Schedule Property by the aforesaid owners, they are hereby called upon to file their objection/s in writing, along with the photocopies of documents on which they rely, with the undersigned, within 14 days from the date of publication of this notice. Objection/s received thereafter will not be binding on my clients.

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of the residential property bearing Municipal No.20/01 (CITB/BDA Site No.369), PID No.53-5-20/01, having E-PID No. 1354150711, measuring East to West 56 ft and North to South 31 ft, in all measuring 1736 Sq.ft, with an old house thereon comprised of ground and first floors, situated at 5th Main Road, Srinagar, Banashankari 1st Stage, 1st Block, Bangalore-560050 and bounded on:

East by : Property bearing No.430
West by : Road
North by : Property bearing No.370
South by : Road

Sd/- S.F. GOUTAM CHAND, Advocate
GOUTAM ASSOCIATES,
No.60, 2nd Floor, Old Kanakapura Road, Basavanagudi, Bengaluru - 560004

personal

CHANGE OF NAME

I Mrs. Nidhi Jain W/o Nikhil Bohara aged 31, residing at # 109/1 Flat No. 401 & 402 Parshwanath Enclave, Bull Temple Road, Bengaluru- 19. have declaring that My Daughter actual & correct name is Jiya Jain as per numerology but in my daughter Birth Certificate (Reg. 803162/B/B/2026/000684) her name mentioned as Jheel Jain and Permanent address is also as above. with Affidavit 27.03.2026 sworn before notary Bharati Patil Bengaluru-78 Reg.No. 20383

tender & notices

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2	Carton Box / Paper Board	220	20	240
3	Waste Airfilter Paper	35	-	35
4	MS Scrap	150	110	260
5	MS Headrest Pipes	-	80	80
6	MS Steel & Wood (Metal Box)	-	18	18
7	MS Rail with Plastic wheels	7	-	7
8	Empty Metal Barrels	140	-	140
9	Plastic & PVC (High Grade)	85	15	100
10	Plastics Painted & Nylon parts (Low Grade)	51	-	51
11	Wood scrap	70	30	100
12	PU Foam	20	-	20
13	Used Batteries	3	-	3
14	Others-Cut pieces of Felt, Cable/ Wire (Al) & Recyclable Glass	9	-	9

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T'gana tables bill against hate crimes, proposes up to 7-yr jail for 1st offence

Roushan.Ali@timesgroup.com

The state govt tabled another bill to protect advocates from assault, grievous hurt and from malicious prosecution, recommending imprisonment of up to three years or a fine of up to Rs 25,000

Hyderabad: Telangana govt on Sunday tabled two bills in the assembly — Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2026, which proposes one to seven years of jail and Rs 50,000 fine for hate crimes, with repeat offences attracting up to 10 years and Rs 1 lakh, and Advocates Protection Bill, 2026, which prescribes six months to three years in jail and fines up to Rs 50,000 for violence against advocates, with repeat offenders liable to be jailed for seven years.

The hate crime bill, after it is passed by both houses, would be reserved by the governor for the consideration and assent of the President under Article 254(2) of the Constitution. IT and industries minister D Sridhar Babu introduced the bill in the house on behalf of the CM.

The objectives and reasons stated in the bill were that there had been a discernible increase in incidents of hate speech and crimes, particularly through digital and social media platforms, which have the potential to spread rapidly and cause serious harm to public order.

"It is, therefore, considered necessary to enact a legislation to curb and prevent the dissemination, publication, or promotion of hate speech and hate crimes," the bill states. A designated officer, as notified by the state govt, would have the power to direct any service provider, intermediary, person or entity to block or remove the materials from its domain.

The Telangana Advocates Protection Bill, 2026, aims to protect advocates from assault, grievous hurt and damage to property. "Any case registered under the provisions of this Act shall be investigated by a police officer not below the rank of a deputy superintendent of police or assistant commissioner of police. Investigation must be completed within a period of 60 days from the date of registration of FIR, or within such time as may be extended by the CP or SP concerned for the reasons to be recorded in writing," the bill states.

It adds that all offences shall be tried by the chief judicial magistrate. It also protects advocates from malicious prosecution, recommending jail of up to three years or a fine of up to Rs 25,000. However, if an advocate is found to have misused the Act, s/he may face imprisonment of up to three years, or a fine of up to Rs 25,000, or both.

M'rashtra govt to regularise residential encroachments

Vaibhav.Ganjapure@timesgroup.com

1,500 SQFT CAP

- Regularisation only **for encroachments that existed before Jan 1, 2011**
- **Up to 1,500 sqft eligible;** excess area to be removed
- Fee to be **25% of mkt value** for **portions used commercially**
- Land to be jointly **registered in husband & wife's names**
- Sensitive lands like **forests, riverbeds, grazing land & public spaces excluded**

Nagpur: Maharashtra govt has approved the regularisation of residential encroachments existing on govt land on Jan 1, 2011 or earlier, free of cost for up to 500 sqft, in order to provide housing security to lakhs of low-income families. The scheme will not cover Mumbai and Mumbai Suburban districts.

"It is the govt's firm stand that no needy family in the state should remain without shelter," Maharashtra revenue minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule said in a media statement on Sunday, adding that its progress would be reviewed every three months.

According to a govt resolution issued on Friday, encroachments beyond 500 sqft will attract an occupancy fee of 10% of the prevailing market value, while the maximum eligible area is capped at 1,500 sqft. Excess construction will be removed. Structures with partial commercial use will be charged 25% of the market value for that portion.

The land will be granted jointly in the names of the husband and wife under the "occupancy class-II" category, with a registration fee of Rs 1,000 for plots up to 1,000 sqft. Authorities have mandated strict scrutiny to ensure that non-citizens are excluded.

Encroachments on ecologically or socially sensitive land — including riverbeds, grazing lands, forests, public roads, cremation grounds, playgrounds, and land reserved for schools and hospitals — will not be regularised. Eligible families in such locations will instead be considered for alternative housing under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

To qualify, applicants must provide proof of residence before Jan 1, 2011, through documents such as voter lists, electricity bills, or property tax receipts, along with evidence of continuous residence over the past year.

Implementation will be overseen by multi-tier committees led by district collectors, sub-divisional officers, and tehsildars, with a 17-member panel under the guardian minister at the district level and additional committees at the constituency level.

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Senior functionaries suggest a BJP nominee will replace Nitish

▶ Continued from page 1

On record, there is no statement from either BJP or JDU on which party will get to keep the top chair, but senior functionaries of both parties have suggested that a BJP nominee will replace Nitish (75). Roles of the two parties will be reversed, with JDU getting the position of deputy CM. While Nitish's son Nishant — who has been hurriedly put through the paces of politics after living a private life all these years to reassure the JD (U) cadre, feeling anxious at the prospect of their leader's imminent departure as CM — is being seen as a deputy CM, there may be more than one person in the position.

Samrat Choudhary, one of the two current deputy CMs and the leader of BJP legislature party, is being seen as a front-runner to replace Nitish for reasons having as much to do with his rapid rise within the party since joining it in 2017 as with his emergence as a leading face of Kushwahas, which at over 4.27% of population is second only to Yadavs at over 14.25%.

With the BJP brass known for unconventional picks, speculation is likely to intensify till an announcement is made.

HC: Woman not legally bound to maintain in-laws

Prayagraj: Allahabad HC has ruled that a daughter-in-law has no legal obligation to maintain her parents-in-law under maintenance law, holding that moral duty cannot be enforced without statutory backing, **reports Rajesh Kumar Pandey**.

Justice Madan Pal Singh said the right to claim maintenance was purely statutory and limited to categories expressly listed under Section 125 of CrPC, now Section 144 of BNSS. "The legislature, in its wisdom, has not included parents-in-law within ambit of said provision... It is not the scheme of legislature to fasten liability of maintenance upon a daughter-in-law towards her parents-in-law under this provision," the court said. The order came while dismissing a criminal revision petition filed by an elderly couple challenging an Aug 2025 ruling of a family court in Agra that had rejected their plea for maintenance. The petitioners said they were old, illiterate, indigent and had been dependent on their son, who had died. They contended that their daughter-in-law, a constable in UP police, had sufficient independent income and had also received the service benefits of her deceased husband. They argued that her moral obligation should be treated as a legal one.

Ideology has taken back seat: Ex-CJI

New Delhi: Ahead of assembly elections, ex-CJI N V Ramana said though there are many political parties subscribing to different ideologies and practicing different 'isms', a lamentable lack of honesty and loyalty among politicians has resulted in all 'isms' converging into 'opportunism', **reports Dhananjay Mahapatra**. Without referring to cross-voting and defections by elected representatives, he on Saturday said, "It shows that (their) loyalty is not to principles or political party. Loyalty is only to power. In the process, the biggest casualty is democracy. There is no loyalty to party ideology or 'isms'."

Which stories should your focus be on?
A child's brain develops most rapidly during the first five years of life, making parental attention crucial for cognitive growth in these formative years.
In response to this important concern, The Times of India has partnered with leading institutions like IIT Delhi, NIMHANS, and CENABH for an initiative that will help provide credible, research-driven insights to foster a healthy digital balance in your life.
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Website: www.rwf.indianrailways.gov.in

Tender Notice No. RWF/M/OT/AMS/2025-26/98RT3 Dated 28.03.2026

E-Tender: On behalf of the President of India, the Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer invites electronic tender in **Two Packet System** for the following work online through the website **http://www.ireps.gov.in** (Works).

Tender No.: RWF/M/OT/AMS/2025-26/98RT3 **Dtd:** 28.03.2026. **Name of the Work:** Outsourcing the machining (Rough turning / Semi Finishing) of 27557 numbers of LHB Axles at firm's premises. **Estimated Cost:** Rs. 30,40,36,381/-. **EMD:** Rs. 16,70,200/-. **Completion Period:** 15 Months. **Date of Closing of Tenders:** 20.04.2026 at 10:30 Hrs.

Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/AP

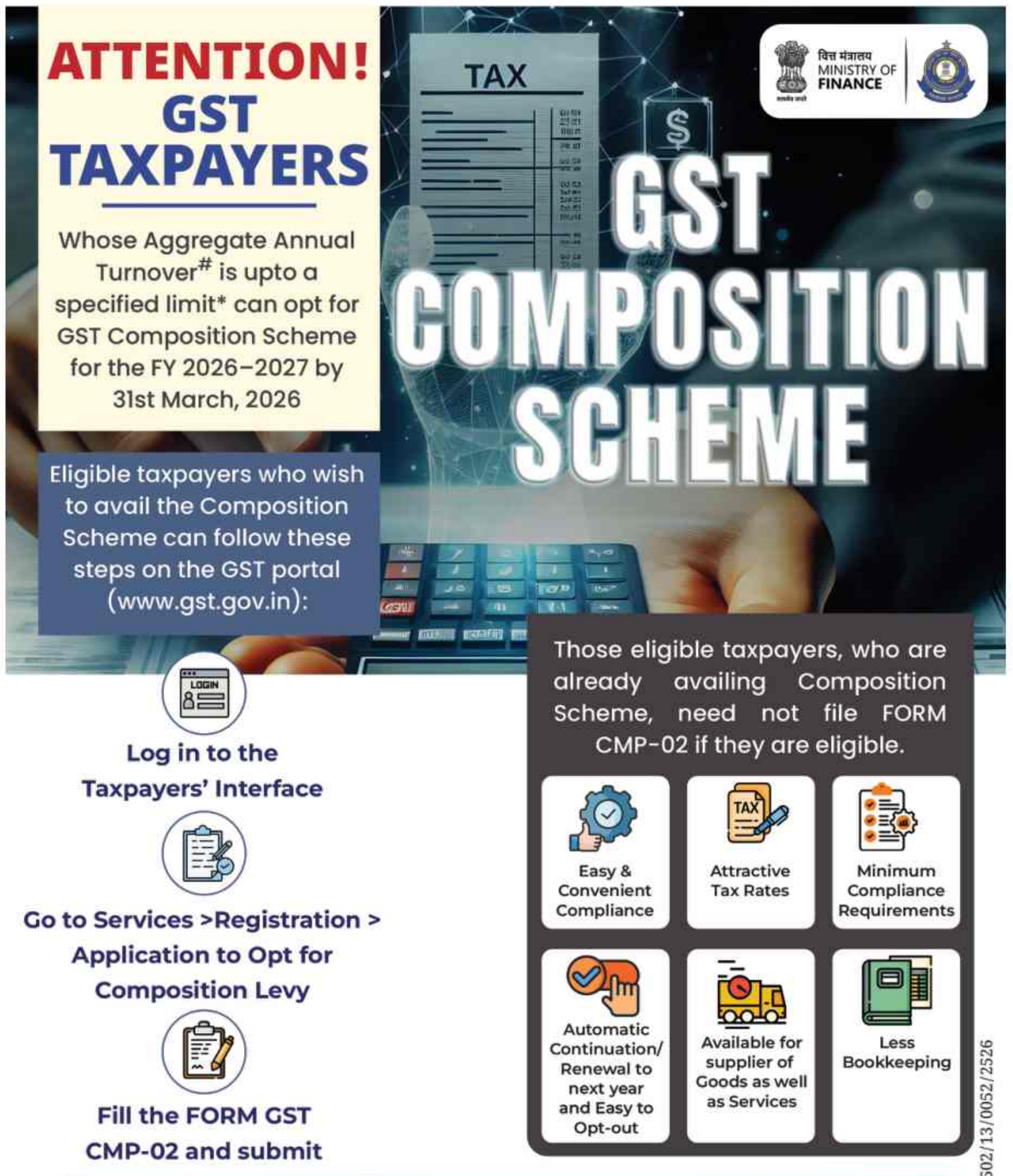
Tender Notice No. RWF/M/OT/AMS/2025-26/99RT3 Dated 28.03.2026

E-Tender: On behalf of the President of India, the Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer invites electronic tender for the following work online through the website **http://www.ireps.gov.in** (Works).

Tender No.: RWF/M/OT/AMS/2025-26/99RT3 **Dtd:** 28.03.2026. **Name of the Work:** Outsourcing the machining (Rough turning / Semi Finishing) of 8712 numbers of WAG-9 Axles at firm's premises. **Estimated Cost:** Rs. 6,66,11,952/-. **EMD:** Rs. 4,83,100/-. **Completion Period:** 15 Months. **Date of Closing of Tenders:** 20.04.2026 at 10:30 Hrs.

The above Tender details can be viewed on our website **www.rwf.indianrailways.gov.in.**

Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/AP


ATTENTION!
GST TAXPAYERS
Whose Aggregate Annual Turnover# is upto a specified limit* can opt for GST Composition Scheme for the FY 2026–2027 by 31st March, 2026
Eligible taxpayers who wish to avail the Composition Scheme can follow these steps on the GST portal (www.gst.gov.in):
वित्त मंत्रालय MINISTRY OF FINANCE
TAX
GST COMPOSITION SCHEME
LOGIN
Log in to the Taxpayers' Interface
Go to Services >Registration > Application to Opt for Composition Levy
Fill the FORM GST CMP-02 and submit
Those eligible taxpayers, who are already availing Composition Scheme, need not file FORM CMP-02 if they are eligible.
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Available for supplier of Goods as well as Services
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* Type of Suppliers		# Aggregate Annual Turnover during FY 2025-26
Supplier of Goods	Taxpayers registered in 08 Specified States	upto ₹75 Lakh
	Taxpayers registered in other States	upto ₹150 Lakh
Supplier of Services		upto ₹50 Lakh

For more details, please refer to section 10 of CGST Act, Rule 3-7 of CGST Rules and Notification No. 14/2019 - Central Tax dated 07.03.2019

GST Composition Scheme: Big Benefits for Small Taxpayers

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Government of India
NATIONAL HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS
Project Implementation Unit - Ramanagara (Mysuru)

PUBLIC NOTICE
REVISION OF USER FEE RATES FOR FY 2026-27
AT ATTIGULIPURA, SATHYAGALA, SOMANAHALLI FEE PLAZA ON NH-948.

The public are hereby informed that, pursuant to Toll Gazette Notification No. S.O 5247(E) dated 05.12.2024 and approval of Competent Authority vide letter dated 23.03.2026, the revised user fee (Toll) rates for FY 2026-27, at Attigulipura, Sathyagala, Somanahalli Toll Plazas shall be applicable with effect from 01.04.2026 (00:00 Hrs.) for the use of two/four lane of BRT Tiger Reserve Boundary to Bangalore section of NH-948 (from Km 287.500 to Km 458.420) in the State of Karnataka executed on HAM mode.
The Revised User Fee Rates for FY 2026-27 to be levied at Fee Plaza at Km 288.700, near Attigulipura, Chamarajanagara District, at Km 359.800 near Sathyagala village, Mandya District and at Km 448.900 Somanahalli, Bangalore South District of NH-948 w.e.f 01.04.2026 (00:00 Hrs) on NH-948 in the State of Karnataka are as follows:

USER FEE RATES – FY 2026-27

Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journey in a month	Fee for commercial vehicles registered within the district of Plaza	Local monthly pass
Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	35	50	1125	15	350
LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	55	80	1820	25	Not Applicable
Truck Bus (2 Axle)	115	170	3810	55	
3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	125	185	4155	60	
Heavy Construction Machinery/ Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	180	270	5975	90	
Oversized Vehicles (7 or more Axle)	220	325	7275	110	

Note: All Amounts are in Rupees

USER FEE RATES – FY 2026-27

Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journey in a month	Fee for commercial vehicles registered within the district of Plaza	Local monthly pass
Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	75	115	2555	40	350
LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	125	185	4130	60	Not Applicable
Truck Bus (2 Axle)	260	390	8655	130	
3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	285	425	9440	140	
Heavy Construction Machinery/ Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	405	610	13570	205	
Oversized Vehicles (7 or more Axle)	495	745	16520	250	

Note: All Amounts are in Rupees

USER FEE RATES – FY 2026-27

Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journey in a month	Fee for commercial vehicles registered within the district of Plaza	Local monthly pass
Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	85	130	2840	45	350
LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	140	205	4590	70	Not Applicable
Truck Bus (2 Axle)	290	435	9610	145	
3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	315	470	10485	155	
Heavy Construction Machinery/ Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	450	680	15075	225	
Oversized Vehicles (7 or more Axle)	550	825	18350	275	

Note: All Amounts are in Rupees

1. The following concessions are available as per the Gazette Notification the above-mentioned Toll Plazas: -
   a. No User Fee shall be levied for the use of this section of National Highway from two-wheeler, three-wheeler and tractors.
   b. For Return journey within 24 hours from time of payment for all categories of vehicles the amount payable is one-half times the fee for one way journey (Discount 25%).
   c. For 50 Single journey in a month from date of payment for all categories of vehicles the Fee payable is Two-third of amount of the fee payable for fifty single journeys (Discount 33%).
   d. A person who owns a mechanical vehicle registered for non-commercial purposes and resides within a distance of twenty kilometers from the fee plaza can avail a Monthly Pass for Rs.350 (Rupees Three Hundred and Fifty Only per month) for the year 2026-27 and is subject to revision every year as per the provisions of NH Fee Rule 2008 and its amendments thereof.
   e. Fee for commercial vehicle (excluding vehicles plying under National permit) registered in the district where the fee plaza falls shall be 50% of the specified rate for that category of vehicle.
2. The list of exempted vehicles is as given in the amendment to NH Fee Rules.
3. The Toll notification for this Plaza Toll Gazette Notification No. S.O 5247(E) dated 05.12.2024 has been published in Gazette of India.
4. For any complaints, emergency, suggestion and feedback please contact NHAI help line number 1033 or contact Office of the Project Director, No. 609, Sri Chamundeswari Railway Layout, Shyadanahalli, Mysuru Taluk & Dist. Pin No. 570003.
5. As per the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008, vide the Gazette amendment Notification No. G.S.R. 388 (E) dated 17th June, 2025, the fee for FASTag Annual Pass for non-commercial cars, jeeps, and vans is revised to Rs. 3,075 for the Financial Year 2026–27, for 200 fee-plaza crossings or 1 year validity whichever is earlier.

BUILDING A NATION NOT JUST ROADS

India accounts for 1 in 10 global maternal deaths: Lancet report

'Deaths Continue To Be Driven By Largely Preventable Causes'

Anuja.Jaiswal
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: India remains among the countries with the highest number of maternal deaths globally, a major study published in The Lancet Obstetrics, Gynaecology & Women's Health has found, with progress slowing down post 2015 after years of rapid decline.

Around 2.4 lakh women died globally in 2023 due to pregnancy and childbirth-related causes, the study estimates. India accounted for about 24,700 of the 2.4 lakh deaths, placing it among the highest-burden countries alongside Nigeria, Pakistan and Ethiopia.

India's long-term numbers reflect both progress and persistent gaps. Maternal deaths fell sharply from about 1.19 lakh in 1990 to 36,900 in 2015 and further to 24,700 in 2023. And the maternal mortality ratio declined from 508 in 1990 to 116 per one lakh live births in 2023, indicating substantial gains but also unfinished work.

"Maternal mortality has declined significantly since 1990 due to better awareness, institutional deliveries and govt programmes, although progress remains uneven across states, with some like Kerala and Tamil Nadu nearing global targets while others such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh continue to report higher maternal mortality," said Dr Abha Majumdar, director, Centre of IVF & Human Reproduction, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

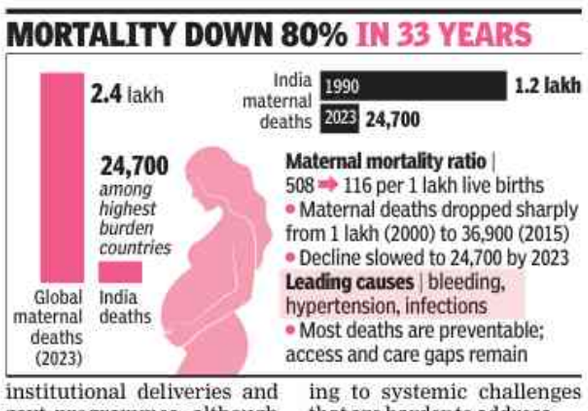
The steepest decline happened between 2000 and 2015, driven by expanded institutional deliveries, improved antenatal care and wider public health interventions. However, the pace has slowed down in recent years, pointing to systemic challenges that are harder to address.

The study points to a persistent pattern in India, where deaths continue to be driven by largely preventable causes such as haemorrhage, hypertensive disorders, infections and complications linked to pre-existing conditions. Delays in receiving care, gaps in quality of services and uneven access across regions remain key concerns.

Globally, the maternal mortality ratio stood at 190 deaths per one lakh live births in 2023, still far above the Sustainable Development Goal target of fewer than 70. More than half of the countries have not reached this level yet.

Researchers also flagged the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which disrupted maternal health services and contributed to additional deaths in several regions during peak years.

Experts say the findings underline the need for India to sustain gains in maternal health, strengthen public health systems and improve quality of care, particularly for high-risk pregnancies and underserved populations. With progress slowing down and risks persisting, the study warns that without renewed focus, countries may fall short of the 2030 goal of making childbirth safer for all women.


MORTALITY DOWN 80% IN 33 YEARS
2.4 lakh
Global maternal deaths (2023)
24,700 among highest burden countries
India deaths
India maternal deaths
1990
1.2 lakh
2023
24,700
Maternal mortality ratio | 508 ➡ 116 per 1 lakh live births
• Maternal deaths dropped sharply from 1 lakh (2000) to 36,900 (2015)
• Decline slowed to 24,700 by 2023
Leading causes | bleeding, hypertension, infections
• Most deaths are preventable; access and care gaps remain

Researchers also flagged the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which disrupted maternal health services and contributed to additional deaths in several regions during peak years

BJD MP quits Dubey-led panel after Biju remarks

Debabrata.Mohapatra
@timesofindia.com

Bhubaneswar: Two days after BJP MP Nishikant Dubey alleged that former Odisha CM Biju Patnaik acted as a "link" between the US govt, the CIA, and the then PM Jawaharlal Nehru, Biju Janata Dal's Rajya Sabha member Sasmit Patra Sunday announced his resignation from the parliamentary standing committee on communications and information technology, which is led by Dubey.

Dubey, a Lok Sabha member, had claimed Nehru fought the entire 1962 war against China with American money and in collaboration with CIA agents. "Biju Patnaik was a link between the US govt, the CIA, and Nehru," he had said.

Expressing outrage, Patra said, "Dubey made disparaging statements against Biju babu, who was widely respected for his role in rescuing Indonesian freedom fighters and for his pivotal role in global diplomacy."

"I cannot, in good conscience, continue to serve under someone who makes such disrespectful remarks about a national icon. The legacy of Biju Patnaik ji will always stand taller than petty politics," he wrote on X.

3 of family charred as car catches fire after crash in MP

Bhopal: Three members of a family, including a three-year-old child, were burned alive after their car crashed off the Baihar-Malajkhand road in MP's Balaghat and caught fire late on Saturday night.

The incident took place near Kewalari intersection between 11pm and midnight, police said, adding that the vehicle veered off the road before bursting into flames. The deceased are Nagarchi Kelkar, 65, Savita Kelkar, 28, and Abhi Kelkar, 3, police said.

Passersby broke the car windowpanes and managed to rescue three other occupants from the burning vehicle.

Among the survivors, Purvi Rahangdale, 8, escaped unhurt. The driver, Seetam Kelkar, 30, and his mother Nana Bai Kelkar, 60, sustained severe burn injuries and were referred to a hospital in Gondia district of neighbouring Maharashtra for treatment, police said. Seetam Kelkar, a resident of Pondi in Paraswada area, runs a welding shop in Pauni, Malajkhand. He visited his native village and was returning to Pauni on Saturday night along with his parents, wife, son, and a neighbour's child when the accident occurred.

A police team and fire brigade staff reached the spot doused the burning car. Police said the bodies of the three victims were sent to Baihar hospital for postmortem and they are investigating how the car caught fire. TNN

Minor student sexually abused by teacher in Hyderabad; 7 arrested

Hyderabad: Local police in Narayanpet on Sunday arrested seven people, including two govt school teachers and one headmaster, after a video showing a teacher allegedly sexually abusing a 16-year-old student went viral.

The incident reportedly took place at a govt school in Narayanpet. Police said that one of the teachers allegedly raped the survivor, who hails from a Scheduled Caste (SC) community.

Investigators found that the offence occurred on March 7 inside the school premises. A 55-year-old male teacher reportedly misbehaved with the minor student in the computer lab, an act captured on CCTV. The prime accused was unaware that a colleague had replaced the defunct CCTV with a working camera to expose his actions.

All the arrested individuals were sent to judicial remand and booked under POCSO Act, along with charges related to evidence tampering. TNN

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NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Request for Proposal (RFP) for Supply, Installation, Configuration and Commissioning of Hardware Infrastructure for ICAI Forensic Labs
The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) invites unconditional sealed bids (Technical & Financial Bids) from eligible, experienced and reputed OEMs/Authorized Dealers/System Integrators for the above project under Pilot Phase. Detailed RFP, eligibility criteria and submission guidelines are available at: https://www.icai.org/post/icai-eoi-tenders
Last Date for Submission: 13th April 2026 up to 5:00 PM
ICAI reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids without assigning any reason.
Secretary, ICAI

Directorate of Medical Education, Uttarakhand
107, Chander Nagar, Dehradun, Email: medicaleducation11@gmail.com
पत्रांक सं: /चिशिउ/04/एलाईड स्थापना/19/2025(भाग-2) Dated: 28 March, 2026
Advertisement Notice
For implementation of "National Commission for allied and health professional act 2021" an advertisement by Directorate Medical Education Uttarakhand via advertisement No. 8525/ME/04/Allied estt. /19/2025 dated 22.02.2026 for the post of "Chairperson" Uttarakhand state allied healthcare commission was advertised, however minimum application were received. Therefore, the last date for receipt of duly filled application form for the post of "Chairperson" Uttarakhand state allied healthcare council is further extended till 30.04.2026. Interested eligible candidates are invited to submit their duly filled applications to Director, Directorate Medical Education, 107, Chander Nagar, Dehradun latest by 30.04.29026. Applications received after the last date will not be entertained.

S.N.	Post	No	Qualification & Experience
01	Chairperson	01	A person of outstanding ability, proven administrative capacity and integrity, possessing a postgraduate degree in any profession of recognized category of allied and healthcare sciences from any University and having experience of not less than Twenty Five years in the field of allied and healthcare sciences, out of which at least Ten years shall be as a leader in the area of allied and healthcare professions to be nominated by the State Government.

For detailed information kindly visit website https://medicaleducation.uk.gov.in
Director, Medical Education Uttarakhand

Government of India
NATIONAL HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS
Project Implementation Unit - Ramanagara (Mysuru)
PUBLIC NOTICE
REVISION OF USER FEE RATES FOR FY 2026-27
AT KANIMINIKE AND SHESHAGIRIHALLI FEE PLAZA ON NH-275.
The public is hereby informed that, pursuant to Toll Gazette Notification No. S.O. 402(E) dated 25.01.2023 and the approval of the Competent Authority vide letter dated 23.03.2026, the revised user fee (toll) rates for FY 2026-27, at Kaniminike and Sheshagirihalli Toll Plazas shall be applicable with effect from 01.04.2026 (00:00 hrs) for the use of the six-laning Bengaluru–Nidaghatta section from Km 18.000 to Km 74.200 of NH-275 in the State of Karnataka, executed under the HAM mode.
The Revised User Fee Rates for FY 2026-27 to be levied at Fee Plaza at Km 23.900, near Kaniminike Village, Bengaluru Urban District and at Km 26.800 near Sheshagirihalli Village, Ramanagara District of NH-275 w.e.f 01.04.2026 (00:00 Hrs) on NH-275 in the State of Karnataka are as follows:

USER FEE RATES – FY 2026-27

Category	Fee for Single Journey (in Rs.)	Fee for return Journey within a day (in Rs.)	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journey in a month (in Rs.)	Local monthly pass (in Rs.)
Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	180	265	5920	350
LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	285	430	9560	Not Applicable
Truck Bus (2 Axle)	600	900	20030	
3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	655	985	21850	
Heavy Construction Machinery/ Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	940	1415	31410	
Oversized Vehicles (7 or more Axle)	1145	1720	38240	

Note: All Amounts are in Rupees

1. The following concessions are available as per the Gazette Notification the above-mentioned Toll Plazas: -
   a. For Return journey within 24 hours from time of payment for all categories of vehicles the amount payable is one-half times the fee for one way journey (Discount 25%).
   b. For 50 Single journey in a month from date of payment for all categories of vehicles the Fee payable is Two-third of amount of the fee payable for fifty single journeys (Discount 33%).
   c. A person who owns a mechanical vehicle registered for non-commercial purposes and resides within a distance of twenty kilometers from the fee plaza can avail a Monthly Pass for Rs.350 (Rupees Three Hundred and Fifty Only per month) for the year 2026-27 and is subject to revision every year as per the provisions of NH Fee Rule 2008 and its amendments thereof.
2. The list of exempted vehicles is as given in the amendment to NH Fee Rules.
3. The Toll notification for this Plaza Toll Gazette Notification No. 402(E) dated 25.01.2023 has been published in Gazette of India.
4. For any complaints, emergency, suggestion and feedback please contact NHAI help line number 1033 or contact Office of the Project Director, No. 609, Sri Chamundeswari Railway Layout, Shyadanahalli, Mysuru Taluk & Dist. Pin No. 570003.
5. As per the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008, vide the Gazette amendment Notification No. G.S.R. 388 (E) dated 17th June, 2025, the fee for FASTag Annual Pass for non-commercial cars, jeeps, and vans is revised to Rs. 3,075 for the Financial Year 2026–27, for 200 fee-plaza crossings or 1 year validity whichever is earlier.

BUILDING A NATION NOT JUST ROADS

Government of India
NATIONAL HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA
(Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Government of India)
Project Implementation Unit – Bengaluru
PUBLIC NOTICE
USER FEE RATES FOR FY 2026-27 AT TOLL PLAZA IN HEDAGINABELE, AGRAHARA, KRISHNARAJAPURA, AND SUNDARAPALYA ON NE-7 APPLICABLE FROM 01.04.2026.
1. The public are hereby informed that pursuant to Government of India Gazette Notification No. S.O.2712(E) dated. 16.06.2025. and approval of Competent Authority, NHAI vide letter dated 24.03.2026, the User fee rates at Hedaginabele, Agrahara, Krishnarajapura, and Sundarapalya, date w.e.f 01.04.2026 (00:00 Hrs) for the use of 4 Laning of Expressway from km 0.000 to km 71.00 (along with 0.700km approach towards NH 207 with interchange on NH-4 at start point) of Bengaluru Bethamangala Section of Bengaluru Chennai Expressway will be levied date w.e.f.01.04.2026 (00:00 Hrs) as below:- Amount in Rs.

At Hedaginabele

Four or more lane section from Km (-)00.700 to Km 71.000 (length 71.700 Km) on Phase-1 (Pkg-1, Pkg-2 & Pkg-3) (along with 0.700 km approach towards NH 207 with interchange on NH-4 at Start Point of Bangalore to Bethamangala Section) of NE-7 in the State of Karnataka

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Agrahara Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	55	80	1,800
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	85	130	2,910
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	185	275	6,095
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	200	300	6,650
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	285	430	9,555
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	350	525	11,635

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Krishnarajapura Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	120	185	4,070
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	195	295	6,570
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	415	620	13,765
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	450	675	15,020
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	650	970	21,590
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	790	1,185	26,285

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Sundrapalya Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	150	225	4,985
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	240	360	8,050
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	505	760	16,870
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	550	830	18,400
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	795	1,190	26,455
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	965	1,450	32,205

At Agrahara

Four or more lane section from Km (-)00.700 to Km 71.000 (length 71.700 Km) on Phase-1 (Pkg-1, Pkg-2 & Pkg-3) (along with 0.700 km approach towards NH 207 with interchange on NH-4 at Start Point of Bangalore to Bethamangala Section) of NE-7 in the State of Karnataka

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Hedaginabele Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	50	75	1,700
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	80	125	2,745
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	175	260	5,755
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	190	280	6,280
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	270	405	9,025
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	330	495	10,985

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Krishnarajapura Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	75	115	2,535
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	125	185	4,090
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	255	385	8,575
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	280	420	9,355
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	405	605	13,445
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	490	735	16,365

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Sundrapalya Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	105	155	3,450
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	165	250	5,570
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	350	525	11,675
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	380	575	12,735
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	550	825	18,310
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	670	1,005	22,290

At Krishnarajapura

Four or more lane section from Km (-)00.700 to Km 71.000 (length 71.700 Km) on Phase-1 (Pkg-1, Pkg-2 & Pkg-3) (along with 0.700 km approach towards NH 207 with interchange on NH-4 at Start Point of Bangalore to Bethamangala Section) of NE-7 in the State of Karnataka

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Hedaginabele Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	120	185	4,080
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	200	295	6,595
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	415	620	13,815
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	450	680	15,070
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	650	975	21,665
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	790	1,185	26,375

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Agrahara Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	75	110	2,485
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	120	180	4,015
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	250	380	8,410
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	275	415	9,170
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	395	595	13,185
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	480	720	16,050

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Sundrapalya Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	40	60	1,340
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	65	95	2,160
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	135	205	4,530
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	150	220	4,940
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	215	320	7,105
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	260	390	8,645

At Sundarapalya

Four or more lane section from Km (-) 00.700 to Km 71.000 (length 71.700 Km) on Phase-1 (Pkg-1, Pkg-2 & Pkg-3) (along with 0.700 km approach towards NH 207 with interchange on NH-4 at Start Point of Bangalore to Bethamangala Section) of NE-7 in the State of Karnataka

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Hedaginabele Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	145	220	4,860
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	235	355	7,850
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	495	740	16,450
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	540	810	17,945
	Heavy Construction Machinery/ Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	775	1,160	25,795
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	940	1,415	31,405

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Agrahara Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	100	145	3,265
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	160	235	5,270
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	330	495	11,045
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	360	540	12,045
	Heavy Construction Machinery/ Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	520	780	17,315
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	630	950	21,080

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Krishnarajapura Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	40	55	1,250
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	60	90	2,020
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	125	190	4,235
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	140	210	4,620
	Heavy Construction Machinery/ Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	200	300	6,640
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	240	365	8,080

2. The following concessions are available as per the Gazette Notification at above Toll Plaza:-
   a) For return journey within 24 hours from time of payment for all categories of vehicles the amount payable is one-half times the fee for one way journey.
   b) For 50 single journey in a month from date of payment for all categories of vehicles the fee payable is Two-third of amount of the fee payable for fifty single journeys.
   c) The driver or owner or a person in charge of a mechanical vehicle which is loaded in excess of permissible load specified for its category, shall be liable to pay fee for entering the overloaded vehicle on the National Highway to the fee collecting agency, equal to the fees specified in sub–rule 1A of rule 10 of the said rules, and shall not be entitled to make use of the highway section unless the excess load has been removed from such mechanical vehicle.
   d) The rates published above are for the year FY 2026-27 and shall be revised w.e.f from 01.04.2027 which is annual rate revision for all the user fee plazas across the country as per rule 5 of NH fee rule 2008 and its amendments.
3. The list of exempted vehicles is as given in the amendment to NH Fee Rules dated 03.12.2010 vide GSR 950 E.
4. The toll notification for this plaza S.O No.2712(E) dated 16.06.2025 has been published in Gazette of India.
5. For any complaints contact: 1033 and enquiry or giving suggestions please contact Project Director, Bengaluru-Tumkuru Road, Beside Nagasandra Metro Station, Bengaluru - 560073 Ph no. 080-28394403/ 080-28394383.

BUILDING A NATION NOT JUST ROADS

CLOSE WATCH

A new blood test using four markers can spot pancreatic cancer early with high accuracy. Backed by USA's National Institutes of Health, the test could help doctors diagnose sooner, start treatment earlier, and improve survival chances for patients

SCIENCE OF THE TIMES

QUICK QUIZ

Born in March 1596, which French mathematician-scientist pioneered the Cartesian coordinate system, advancing geometry & physics, and laid foundations for modern scientific thinking through analytical methods and mathematical reasoning? Send answers to **scienceofthetimes@timesofindia.com**

Water Discovery Fuels Return To Moon

How Chandrayaan-1, Fitted With A Key Nasa Instrument, Helped Revive Crewed Lunar Programme

Chethan.Kumar
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If all systems are go and barring *force majeure*, four astronauts will in two days lift off towards the Moon on a giant rocket, becoming the first humans to head in that direction in over 50 years, since Nasa's Apollo programme ended in 1972. After technical delays in Feb and March, Nasa is now preparing for launch on April 1 (April 2 in India).

The astronauts will not land. Instead, they will fly a loop around the Moon, breaking at least two spaceflight records. Depending on launch timing and trajectory, the crew of Artemis 2 are expected to reach a peak distance of over 4 lakh km from Earth, the farthest humans have travelled since Apollo 13 in 1970. They are also likely to hit 40,000 kmph on return, faster than Apollo 10's record of 39,897 kmph, in 1969.

> In the southern polar region, in the deep craters, there are billions of tonnes of ice. That was a huge finding as far as future missions were concerned
> **— G Madhavan Nair** | FORMER ISRO CHAIRMAN WHO OVERSAW CHANDRAYAAN-1

The launch is historic, a revival of crewed lunar missions. And it's the discovery of water by Chandrayaan-1 that helped reignite humanity's interest in the Moon.

Nasa's crewed missions ended after Apollo 17. Analysis of lunar rocks returned by US astronauts led scientists to conclude the Moon lacked water and geological activity. Without water, there could be no sustained human presence. Every kilogram needed for life support or propulsion would have to be launched from Earth, making missions extremely impractical.

"After the landings on the Moon, people took a view that there was nothing much of interest there, that it was an uninhabitable place," says G Madhavan Nair, former Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) chairman, who oversaw Chandrayaan-1.

Designed as a remote-sensing mission, it had Indian and international instruments, including Nasa's Moon Mineralogy Mapper and Isro's own spectrometer. The mission was not built around certainty that water would be found.

"But the theory existed. That is why a Nasa payload with the ability to detect water lines was flown on Chandrayaan-1, along with our spectrometer," says S Somanath, former Isro chairman, who oversaw Chandrayaan-3 in 2023.

The data that came back was subtle, and the response cautious. Spectral signatures indicated hydroxyl and water molecules embedded in lunar minerals across large regions of the surface, with higher concentrations towards the poles.

"Once the American side published the presence of water on the Moon, we published our data which had also found that it was true," Somanath says.

Nair says the discovery was a "combined effort" as both the Nasa and Isro datasets confirmed water.

Further analysis suggested water could exist as ice in permanently shadowed areas of the Moon.

"In the southern polar region, in deep craters, there are billions of tonnes of ice," says Nair, adding: "That was a huge finding as far as future missions were concerned, because you need water for everything. If water is there, you can even make hydrogen out of it and use it as fuel for a rocket."

Somanath says when hydroxyl molecules were identified, especially near the poles, the "possibility of finding trapped water or ice became real".

In the absence of an atmosphere, water cannot remain liquid on the surface, but buried in polar regolith, it becomes a viable resource.

It wasn't just water. Chandrayaan-1 also found significant helium deposits, including helium-3, an isotope often cited as future fuel for nuclear fusion.

M Annadurai, project director, Chandrayaan-1, says the orbiter's impact is broadly acknowledged. "Things revived because of Chandrayaan-1. There is no doubt about that. The mission is frequently cited in international forums," he says.

The post-Chandrayaan vision now goes beyond brief visits, including longer stays, international cooperation, a possible lunar space station, and missions deeper into space.

"The Moon becomes an outpost, a launch pad to Mars," Annadurai says.

In 2023, Isro landed Chandrayaan-3 near the Moon's south pole. The craft sent data on regolith behaviour, thermal properties and seismic activity.

"It gave us direct surface-level information that earlier missions could only infer remotely. Together, the missions demonstrated that the Moon was not geologically inert, that it was not a dead body," Somanath says.

The timing mattered too. Chandrayaan had coincided with maturation of low-cost robotic technologies, making lunar missions accessible to more actors. After its findings, missions were commissioned by the US, Russia, Japan, and several European, Arab and African nations.

China had its lunar programme plans running parallel. The US adopted a commercial model, funding multiple private landers and orbiters that fed into Artemis planning. Importantly, by the time Nasa formally committed to Artemis — a programme that has so far cost an estimated $90 billion — the scientific justification was in place.

So as the four astronauts of Artemis 2 get ready for the much-awaited — and delayed — launch, they carry with them more than the legacy of the Apollo programme.

ARTEMIS 2'S INCREDIBLE 10-DAY TEST

This will be the first time a crew leaves low-Earth orbit since Apollo 17 in 1972. Astronauts of Artemis 2, in fact, will spend 24 hours in high orbit 70,000 km from Earth, much beyond the International Space Station, which is a mere 400 km above us. Artemis 2 is a test flight to see how new equipment and systems behave during long trips deep into space. It's a significant step before future Artemis missions, which hope to land people on the Moon by 2028

HIGH-TECH: This is how the crew will be seated as Orion heads to the Moon, with computers doing most of the flying. Just one of Orion's two computers is 20,000 times faster than the computer that was aboard Apollo, which had to be flown manually during certain critical manoeuvres

During its loop around the Moon's far side, Orion will be 6,000-10,000 kilometres above lunar surface, farther than any Apollo flight

'FREE-RETURN TRAJECTORY': FLY TO MOON & BACK EVEN IF ENGINES FAIL

1. Space Launch System (SLS) rocket lifts off from Florida with Orion. SLS's four engines will be fed nearly **5,000 litres of fuel per second** for 8 mins, the time till orbit
2. After insertion into low-earth orbit, SLS second stage will fire to take the crew higher. Here, the astronauts will begin their first set of checks of critical systems
3. Another engine burn will take the crew even higher for a longer orbit, setting up the **free-return trajectory, a loop of the Moon and back using just gravity, even if engines fail**
4. Orbital checks start as Orion splits from SLS's second stage. For a brief moment here, Orion will be under full manual control as crew test flight controls
5. Orion is at translunar injection. **From this point, there's no turning back for crew, not without circling the Moon first.** From here, based on speed, lunar orbit is roughly four days away
6. Orion reaches a point from where **Moon will appear to the crew as about the same size as a basketball at arm's length.** It then slingshots for a four-day return trip to Earth

322 FT
Height of the SLS rocket

WEIGHTLIFTER: SLS is the only rocket currently powerful enough to send Orion to the Moon, which is nearly 1,000 times farther than the ISS

APOLLO VS ORION

Orion capsule has 30% more space than Apollo. Four crew can be in Orion for 21 days compared to Apollo's three for 14 days. Orion has a toilet; Apollo had none. On Apollo 8, one astronaut famously had an 'incident' that forced crew to collect faeces in paper towels

'SKIP RE-ENTRY' FOR THE FIRST TIME WITH HUMANS

- **Spacecraft from the Moon enter Earth's atmosphere faster** than those from low orbit: 11 km per second compared to 8. On re-entry, Orion's heat shield could heat up to 2,700°C as the craft hits Mach 30
- There have been concerns around Orion's heat shield. During a 2022 test, **Artemis 1's Orion lost chunks of its heat shield on re-entry,** indicating structural stress
- To ease pressure, Artemis 2's Orion will do a skip re-entry, like flat stones skimming a still lake. Orion will dip, fly up again and then land. Skip re-entry has never been tried with a crewed ship

Only Apollo 13 has ever flown the full free-return path, after an explosion forced its 3-member crew to abort their Moon landing in 1970

MEET THE ARTEMIS 2 CREW

All of these four astronauts were born after the Apollo lunar programme ended

CHRISTINA KOCH (47)
She will be the first woman to go to the Moon. In 2019, she spent 328 days on ISS, the longest stay there by a woman

REID WISEMAN (50)
Artemis 2 commander. This will be his second spaceflight after a 165-day mission to ISS in 2014. He's also a fighter pilot

VICTOR GLOVER (49)
He'll pilot Orion. Has 3,500 flight hours in 40 aircraft, over 400 carrier landings and 24 combat missions under his belt

JEREMY HANSEN (50)
Canadian, and the first non-American to fly to the Moon, making his country second after US to send people into deep space

LAST WEEK'S QUICK QUIZ Question on March 23: Religious legend has it that St Patrick drove all the snakes out of this country. Now scientists have attributed the absence of the reptiles to the ice age that ended 11,700 years ago. Which country is this? **Answer:** Ireland

TIMES NATION

Rahul's sudden departure an irreparable loss: Mamata

▶ Continued from P 1

We were filming a honeymoon scene with him and Sweta (Mishra) in knee-deep water. The first take was completed. Sweta felt uneasy after a small wave hit her and decided to leave. Rahul da wanted a second take with him facing the camera and went deeper into the water. The entire team requested him to come out, but he didn't listen. A bigger wave caused him to slip. We all jumped to rescue him. Lifeguards also joined the operation, and he was rushed to a hospital. Rahul da responded twice during the journey but was pronounced dead upon arrival," Subhashis Mondal, director of "Bhole Baba Paar Korega", said.

A senior doctor at Digha State General Hospital said the actor was brought to the hospital at 6.10pm. "He had passed away by the time our doctors examined him," he added.

Cops reached the hospital after receiving information. "The actor was brought in a lifeless state. While primary evidence points towards a heart attack followed by drowning, we need to go through postmortem report to know the cause of death. An unnatural death case has been registered," said a senior cop in East Midnapore district.

Police were questioning crew members to determine the sequence of events and whether safety protocols were followed during the shoot. The body was kept in the mortuary.

Rahul had made his Tollywood debut in the 2009 superhit film "Chirodini Tumi Je Amar". He married his co-star, Priyanka Sarkar, a year later. The couple have a 13-year-old son, Shohoj.

"This news has left me stunned, heartbroken, and grief-stricken. I just can't make sense of how this happened... Rahul's sudden departure is an irreparable loss for the Bengali acting world, Tollywood and Tellywood," Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee posted on X.

Govt: Nearly 3L PNG connections added in March

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Govt on Sunday said about 6,000 piped gas consumers have surrendered their LPG connections in the last three days, while 2.9 lakh new PNG connections have been activated this month, easing pressure on cylinder stocks amid disruption of energy supplies due to the West Asia conflict.

Petroleum secretary Neeraj Mittal, in an online post, said that by giving up their LPG connections, people have helped those who don't have access to gas cylinders. "Join this strong, bold group of do-good citizens who have come forward to give up LPG to help those get LPG who don't have PNG," he said on X.

Govt has made piped gas connections mandatory in areas with a network, and said LPG supply will be discontinued after three months. It has also launched a portal where PNG users can express their interest in giving up LPG. LPG cylinders will be picked up from houses and security deposit refunded by the distributor.

The petroleum ministry, in a statement, said govt was focused on sustaining uninterrupted availability of petroleum products and LPG across the country.

It said though the LPG supply has been affected due to the geopolitical situation, delivery of domestic LPG cylinders is normal, with 55 lakh refills distributed on Saturday. It added there were sufficient stocks of petrol and diesel.

Following concerns over adequate availability of PNG to operate urea plants, govt said supply was steady at around 70-75% of their average consumption in the last six months. "All industrial consumers, including fertiliser plants, have been advised to provide their additional requirement on a spot basis so that the same may be arranged by gas marketing companies," govt said, adding that additional liquefied and regasified natural gas cargos were being sourced to maintain supplies and pipeline hydraulics.

Two LPG tankers carrying a day's supply on way

New Delhi: Two more India-flagged LPG tankers, carrying roughly a day's supply of the country's cooking gas, have safely navigated through the Strait of Hormuz and are expected to reach Indian shores in the next couple of days.

"Two LPG carriers, BW TYR and BW ELM, carrying a combined LPG cargo of about 94,000 tonnes, have safely transited the region and are moving towards Indian shores," an official statement said. While BW TYR is proceeding towards Mumbai with an expected arrival on March 31, BW ELM is en route to New Mangalore with an estimated arrival date of April 1.

The US and Israel attacks on Iran and Tehran's sweeping retaliation have all but halted shipping through the strait - the narrow shipping lane that is a conduit for oil and gas exports from Gulf countries to the world. Iran, however, last week said "non-hostile vessels" may transit the waterway after coordinating with Iranian authorities.

For a country that relies on imports from Gulf nations to meet 60% of its cooking gas needs, the arrivals will help ease the worst LPG shortage it is battling in decades. India consumed 33.15 MT of LPG last year, with imports accounting for 60% of demand. PTI

Govt working to minimise crisis impact on India: PM

Slams Oppn For Rumours 'Causing Major Harm To Country'

▶ Continued from P 1

Launching the BJP-led NDA's poll campaign at a rally in Kerala's Palakkad, Modi said many people from the state are working in regions hit by the conflict and "for us their safety remains a top priority". "Govt is working towards ensuring the crisis impact on India is minimal," he said.

However, he said, the people must remember the kind of statements Congress is making on sensitive issue of the conflict situation, terming the party "dangerous". The PM added, "Congress wants the lives of nearly one crore Indians living in Gulf countries to be put at risk, so that it can gain political advantage from it."

Slamming NDA's opponents — governing LDF and UDF — Modi alleged Kerala has been trapped for decades between the two fronts which have indulged in self-centered politics. "Between LDF and UDF, Congress and Communists, one is corrupt and the other is highly corrupt, communal and highly communal. The policies of LDF and UDF are for vote-bank politics," he said as he recalled "so many of our workers have lost their lives due to political violence here". "I pay my tributes to them," Modi said.

PTI

PM Modi plays the chenda, a traditional cylindrical percussion instrument from Kerala, during a public meeting in Palakkad

In his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' address, he slammed the opposition for spreading rumours, saying it is causing major harm to the country. He asked people to be vigilant and not be misled and said they should only trust the information being provided by govt.

Some opposition leaders have said govt may impose a lockdown to handle the crisis and will go for jacking up fuel prices after the assembly polls are over, claims which have been denied by the Centre.

"As always, I am confident that just as we have overcome past crises with the strength of our 140 crore citizens, this time too, we will together emerge victorious from this difficult situation," Modi said.

'Surya Ghar' led to solar energy revolution: PM

New Delhi: PM Narendra Modi on Sunday said the PM Surya Ghar Yojana has triggered a solar energy revolution, benefiting people across the country.

In his monthly radio broadcast 'Mann Ki Baat', he said the scheme has not only helped people train as solar technicians and become entrepreneurs, but also supplemented their income by turning them into energy traders and electrifying villages in difficult terrains. With summer setting in, he also urged people to renew their commitment to water conservation.

More than 27 lakh rooftop solar plants have been installed under the scheme since its launch in Feb 2024, adding nearly 10 GW of capacity. Govt aims to install one crore rooftop solar plants by March 2027.

"Until a few years ago, this (solar panels) was seen only in a few homes. But today, the impact of the scheme is visible in every corner of the country," he said, adding it has also helped bring electricity to villages in the north-east. TNN

Lankan prez thanks India for fuel aid amid conflict

Colombo: Sri Lankan President **Anura Kumara Dissanayake** on Sunday expressed his gratitude towards India for its support in sending fuel to the country. Dissanayake said that 38,000MT of fuel arrived in Colombo on Sunday amid the West Asia crisis.

In a post on X, he said, "Spoke with PM Narendra Modi a few days ago about the fuel supply disruptions Sri Lanka is facing due to the West Asia conflict. Grateful for India's swift support. 38,000 MT of fuel arrived in Colombo yesterday. My thanks also to EAM S Jaishankar for his close coordination."

A statement from the PMO said the two leaders discussed the evolving situation in West Asia with an emphasis on disruptions affecting global energy security. They reiterated the importance of keeping shipping lines open and secure in the interest of the world.

The leaders also reviewed the progress in initiatives aimed at strengthening India-Sri Lanka energy cooperation and enhancing regional security.

Modi iterated India's firm commitment to work closely together in addressing shared challenges in line with India's Neighbourhood First policy and Mahasagar vision.

On March 23, Jaishankar had also held a telephonic conversation with Sri Lanka's foreign minister Vijitha Herath.

In a post on X, Jaishankar said, "A good conversation with FM Vijitha Herath of Sri Lanka. Discussed the repercussions of the West Asia conflict. India stands committed to Neighbourhood First and Mahasagar vision."

The outreach to Colombo is significant as several neighbouring nations have reportedly sought additional fuel supplies from India to manage energy shortages resulting from the crisis. The minister confirmed that he "discussed the repercussions of the West Asia conflict". ANI

Census answers need no documentary backing

▶ Continued from page 1

The house listing operations phase of census will be between April 1 and Sept 30, as separately notified by each state or Union territory. The initial 15 days of this 45-day window will be for self-enumeration, followed by a 30-day enumeration period.

Census does not require respondents to back their answers, which must be best to their knowledge and belief, with any documentary proof. The rules require enumerators to record information as declared by the respondent. Self-enumeration (SE), which starts in NDMC area of Delhi on April 1, allows respondents to fill in information regarding themselves via a dedicated web portal. The SE facility is available in English and 15 Indian languages.

Self-enumeration may be done by the head of the household — one who manages household affairs and makes important decisions, and not necessarily the eldest male member — or any responsible adult member after completing OTP-based mobile verification.

Details of all normally residing members of the household may be provided using the single household access. A key requirement of self-enumeration is marking the location of one's house/residence correctly. For this, respondents must select the district name from the dropdown menu and enter PIN code, before entering information regarding their village, locality, street or nearby landmark. Clicking a search option will load the geotagging-based map of the area; the respondent must zoom in till individual houses are visible and place the marker exactly on their house, ensuring the correct side of the road and landmarks match. "Incorrect placement of marker may lead to non-availability of the household data in the enumerators' app," it is suggested in the FAQs.

TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2026

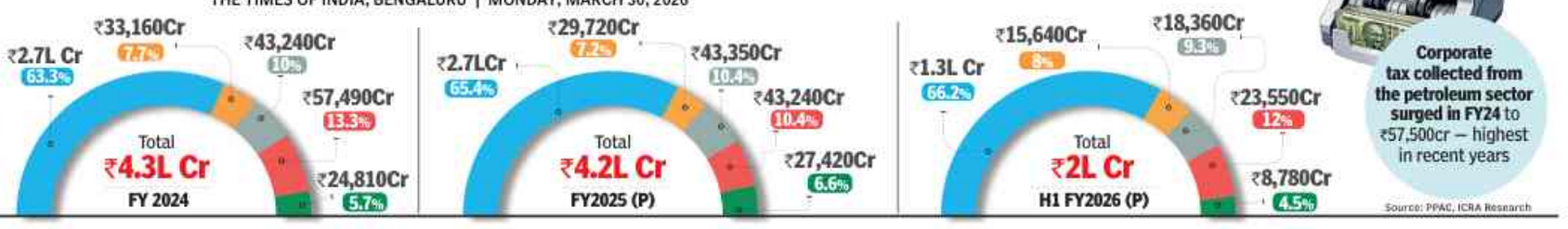
OIL STILL FUELS GOVT'S TAX TANK

Petroleum continued to underpin govt revenues, contributing ₹4.2 lakh crore in FY2025, with nearly ₹2 lakh crore collected in H1 FY2026 on steady fuel tax inflows

Petroleum contributed **₹4.2L cr in FY2025 (1.3% of GDP)** and **₹4.3L cr in FY24 (1.5% of GDP)** H1 FY2026 collections at nearly **₹2 lakh crore**

Excise duty dominates with **63%** of the total

Contribution of petroleum sector to the central exchequer



Corporate tax collected from the petroleum sector surged in FY24 to ₹57,500cr — highest in recent years

Source: PPAC, ICRA Research

Bank account portability on RBI's agenda

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Reserve Bank of India has placed consumer empowerment through portable bank accounts and cross-border efficiency at the centre of its Payments Vision 2028, signalling a new focus to improving user experience and reducing friction in money movement.

While customers can freely open accounts with any bank, savings accounts are considered 'sticky' because of multiple standing instruction to send and receive money into the specified account. RBI's work around this stickiness is a Payments Switching Service where all standing instructions are centralised. This centralised interface will allow customers to view and migrate all payment mandates, both incoming and outgoingreducing dependence on individual banks making accounts portable.

A key thrust is on making cross-border payments faster, cheaper and more accessible. The central bank plans a comprehensive review of the ecosystem to identify regulatory, operational and technological bottlenecks, aligning domestic systems with global standards shaped by the G20.

Proposed changes aim to lower entry barriers for firms, promote innovation and reduce delays in cross-border fund transfers. This comes at a time when India has been signing agreements with other countries to link domestic fast payments systems and enable CBDC acceptance.

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RIL SEZ export duty clarity key under fuel tax rejig: Experts

New Delhi: The applicability of newly reimposed export windfall taxes on shipments of diesel and ATF from Reliance Industries' SEZ refinery remains the key uncertainty, following India's fuel duty overhaul, with significant implications for refining margins and govt revenues, according to analysts.

Under the revised framework, effective March 26, India has imposed export duties of Rs 21.50 per litre on diesel and Rs 29.50 per litre on aviation turbine fuel (ATF) while keeping petrol exports exempt. This came alongside a Rs 10 per litre cut in excise duty on petrol and diesel.

However, it is not yet clear whether exports from Reliance's special economic zone (SEZ) refinery, which accounted for a large share of India's refined product exports, will continue to enjoy exemptions, as they did under the 2022 windfall tax regime, UK's Investec said in a note.

Reliance owns and operates two refineries at Jamnagar in Gujarat — a 33 million tonnes per year unit catering to the domestic market, and a 35.2 million tonnes only-for-exports SEZ unit. AGENCIES

PESB okays SAIL fin director Panda as CMD

New Delhi: The Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) has recommended Ashok Kumar Panda, director of finance at Steel Authority of India (SAIL), for the post of chairman and managing director of the state-run steel maker. Panda brings over three decades of experience across various plants and units of SAIL. TNN

Foreign brokerages cut India Inc's earnings, index targets

Warn About Worsening Fisc, BoP As Crude Prices Gallop

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₹ WEAKNESS COMPOUNDS DOWNSIDE RISKS

- **Goldman Sachs** cut its 1-year Nifty target by 11.6% to 25,900 pts, while **Citigroup** cut its Nifty target by 5.3% to 27,000 pts
- **HSBC:** A 10% rise in oil price could pull down broader indices (sensex, Nifty) by 1.3%
- **BNP Paribas** said India's current account deficit could expand due to higher crude prices, dipping remittances
- It also said inflation could rise over higher petro-product prices, rising raw material costs could dent corporate earnings

Mumbai: Thanks to the war in West Asia and the ensuing oil price-led shock that the Indian economy is currently facing, top foreign brokerages and analysts have cut earnings estimates for India Inc as well as targets for Nifty by nearly 12%. They also warned that if the war continues for long and the oil price surges to a new all-time peak, the impact on the economy and the market could be severe.

Foreign broking major Goldman Sachs has cut the Nifty target to 25,900 points from 29,300 points earlier while Citigroup has revised down their target for the index to 27,000 points from 28,500 points earlier. On its part, HSBC said that historical trend shows that a 20% rise in oil price could drag down earnings of India Inc by 1.3 percentage points. Since the war started crude oil prices are up about 50-55%.

Goldman Sachs downgraded India to 'market weight' from 'overweight' on a less attractive risk-reward matrix compared to some of the other Asian markets, amid worsening macro and slowing earnings growth, a note from the financial services major said. Analysts expect India Inc would show earnings growth of 8% in 2026 and 13% in 2027. "We see risks tilted to the downside in the next three to six months, as we think the market may not be pricing in the full extent of earnings cuts. (The potential) upside catalysts include earlier-than-assumed resumption of oil flows, and a clear recovery in India's earnings cycle."

In its report, HSBC said that data shows a 10% supply-driven rise in oil price has led to about a 1.3% decline in the broader Indian equity index, with consumer discretionary, tech services, and financials typically more exposed. "The risk gets compounded by currency weakness: A 1% (rupee) depreciation tends to translate into a further 1% market drag. These relationships are broadly consistent with recent performance: oil has risen about 55% since the outbreak of the conflict, while the (rupee) has depreciated about 3.5%, this implies an overall market impact of around 11%."

The BNP Paribas report said that "A 10% increase in oil price leads to about 35 basis points (bps) rise in current account deficit (CAD)." It also noted that with the war continuing, remittances from West Asia could slow down, further impacting CAD.

NSE to float dated Brent futures

New Delhi: NSE will introduce Dated Brent Crude Oil (Platts) futures from April 13. The monthly contract, will be traded under the symbol "BRCRUDEOIL". AGENCIES

No jail term for farm goods, textiles export rule slip-ups

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New Delhi: The latest Jan Vishwas Bill, moved in Parliament on Friday, has proposed removing imprisonment for several offences related to export of textiles, handloom, and farm products.

For instance, under the Textiles Committee Act, exporting and selling textiles or textile machinery in contravention of prescribed order, which can result in a jail term of up to one year is being done away with and the fine is proposed to be converted to warning for the first contravention, with a penalty of up to Rs 25 lakh proposed for every subsequent contravention.

Similarly, failure to furnish information or sample, or furnishing false information or sample and damaging books of account or refusal to furnish it will not result in a jail term of up to three months, instead a fine of Rs 10,000-25,000 can be levied under the Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act. Similar changes are also proposed under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act with general contraventions seeing imprisonment and fine converted into warning and penalty when it comes to contraventions of any provisions of the law or the rules.

Jan Vishwas Bill

Importing or exporting scheduled agricultural products in violation of the prescribed order, currently punishable with up to a year in jail and fine is proposed to be converted to penalty (Rs 10,000 or twice the value of goods, whichever is higher).

Imprisonment and fine have also been removed for failure to produce books and records and for obstructing a member or an officer.

Under the Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, producing articles reserved for exclusive production by handlooms is proposed to be dealt with through a reduced imprisonment term of three months, compared with six now, and enhancing the fine from Rs 5,000 per loom to Rs 10,000-25,000 per loom. Exporting of coir products without licence or in contravention of Sea Customs Act, 1878 which is currently punishable with fine of up to Rs 500 is proposed to be omitted.

RBI's forced dollar unwind to keep rupee from sliding, bruise banks

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The RBI's unorthodox move to steady the rupee by forcing banks to unwind foreign exchange positions beyond $100 million will prevent its slide towards 95, even as markets fret over a possible escalation in the Iran conflict and the prospect of a US ground invasion.

The move will also cause banks with large open positions to lose money. Over the weekend, banks pressed RBI to either relax or grant more time. With RBI standing firm, banks will have to start unwinding on Monday to meet the April 10 deadline.

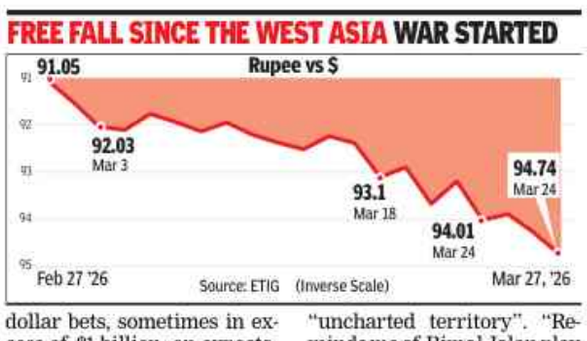
Until Friday, banks could run net open positions of up to 25% of their net worth. In practice, large lenders often accumulated sizeable long dollar bets, sometimes in excess of $1 billion, on expectations of rupee depreciation. The new cap forces a rapid reversal. By April 10, 2026, banks must cut these exposures to $100 million. This compels them to sell dollars and buy rupees to close the gap.

Uday Kotak, called the move "an unconventional policy action" triggered by a West Asia crisis that has entered "uncharted territory". "Reminds me of Bimal Jalan play book as RBI Governor in 1998 when the rupee was depreciating sharply post Asian crisis. If things get worse geo politically, is there an opportunity for a new version of FCNR (B) scheme?" he said.

Some bankers are sceptical of special schemes to raise dollars. Earlier dollar mopping exercises relied on offering guaranteed returns to non-resident Indians, who borrowed cheaply abroad and parked funds in India. Such tactics may be less effective now. Investors have access to a wider array of structured products, and it is cheaper for the RBI to raise dollars through rupee dollar swaps, bankers said.

Despite the RBI move pressure persists as dollar is expected to gain globally due to geopolitical tensions rise and fuel inflation fears and FPIs selling across markets. "FPIs were net sellers on all trading days in March, so far, taking total selling through March 27 to a record Rs 1,18,093 crore," said VK Vijayakumar. The key drivers are the West Asia conflict, Gulf remittance-risk, hit to growth and earnings from high crude prices.

FREE FALL SINCE THE WEST ASIA WAR STARTED



TOI IN THE CLASSROOM

How To Navigate Investing In A Falling Market

The drop in value of equity mutual funds sparked by the 10% drop in Nifty over the last month has unnerved investors. Many are now grappling with a familiar set of questions—should they invest a lumpsum, top up SIPs, or restructure portfolios and move out of loss-making schemes?

Invesco Mutual Fund
An investor education and awareness initiative

For Know Your Customer (KYC) guidelines along with the documentary requirements and procedure for change of address, phone number, bank details, etc., please visit the Education and Guidance section on www.invescomutualfund.com. Investor should deal with only SEBI registered Mutual Funds, details of which can be verified under "Intermediaries/Market Infrastructure Institutions" on https://www.sebi.gov.in/index.html. For any grievance / complaint, please call us on 1800-209-0007 or write to us at mfservices@invescoindia.com. Alternatively, complaints can be registered on the SEBI SCORES Portal at https://scores.sebi.gov.in

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

Good Time To Invest Lumpsum In Equity MFs?

Wealth managers say lumpsum investing at this stage needs to be seen in the context of valuations and one's own risk appetite. Nifty's Price to Earnings (PE) ratio—a key valuation measure—has corrected to 19.7 times from 24.4 in Sept 2024. Fund managers point out that sub-20 levels have historically been seen as "fair" levels for long-term entry, with further declines seen as making it more conducive to invest.

So, investors with a time horizon of over five years—and the ability to ride out near-term volatility—can consider putting some money to work now. That said, a staggered approach may be more comfortable. For instance, deploying about 30% now and spreading the rest over the next few months.

Another option is to park funds in a liquid scheme and start a daily or weekly Systematic Transfer Plan (STP) over about six months. This way, the money continues to earn 6-7% while gradually moving into equities.

Is There A Need To Restructure Portfolio Now?

Financial planners say this may be a good time for such investors to step back and review their portfolios in line with their risk appetite and long-term goals. Those heavily tilted towards one asset class could look at diversifying across equity, debt and other assets.

Many have built portfolios by chasing recent winners— ending up with concentrated exposure to gold, silver, or narrow thematic funds. Similarly, investors with SIPs in thematic funds may want to move towards diversified options, such as large-cap index or flexi-cap funds. Those who are already well-diversified and aligned to their goals can largely ignore the noise.

What To Do With Lossmaking Schemes?

Investors with a time horizon of over seven years can continue with diversified equity funds and look past short-term volatility. However, if a significant portion of the portfolio is in thematic or sectoral funds—especially beyond the intended allocation—it may be worth reviewing. Adding more money to average such positions may not be advisable.

If exposure is high and beyond one's risk tolerance, investors could trim these positions and reallocate to diversified equity funds, with flexibilty to invest across broader opportunities.

— PRASHANT MAHESH

Fuel efficiency: At ₹2,728cr, fine on car cos cut to 1/3rd

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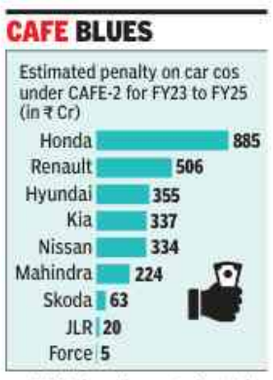
New Delhi: The penalty on nine carmakers that failed to meet the Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE-2) targets for three years — FY23 to FY25 — has been revised to Rs 2,728 crore, as per power ministry's presentation made to the PMO last week. Earlier, the penalty was estimated around Rs 7,800 crore.

Earlier, penalty was fixed at Rs 10 lakh per OEM plus Rs 25,000 per car manufactured for non-compliance of norms below 0.2 litres per 100km and Rs 50,000 per unit for violation beyond 0.2 litres per 100km. Under the new calculation, for April-Dec of FY23, penalty has been fixed at Rs 37.5 lakh as standard for all OEMs. This has resulted in reduction of penalty.

CAFE BLUES



TOI has learnt that the ministry also said in its presentation that the credit-debit registry of each original equipment manufacturer (OEM) will be established and maintained by the designated authority. Officials said this will ensure better enforcement of penalties and provisions along with providing greater clarity as govt is working to finalise the norms for CAFE-3.

The ministry, in its presentation, said that surplus credits generated by a manufacturer may be pooled within the same block period — first three years and then two years during the 5-year implementation period — for compliance. OEMs with deficit credits can procure credits from other manufacturers holding surplus credits. Manufacturers that still remain with deficit credits will face penalties.

Earlier, PMO had asked power and road ministries to come up with a clear mechanism for recovery of penalties imposed on carmakers. CAFE-2 is in force from FY23 to FY27 and the next phase is scheduled to be from FY28 to FY32.

Rentomojo files DRHP for ₹150cr IPO

Bengaluru: Rentomojo, a furniture and appliances rental platform, has filed its draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) with Sebi for an initial public offering.

The proposed IPO comprises a fresh issue of shares worth up to Rs 150 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 2.8 crore equity shares by existing shareholders, according to the DRHP.

Promoter Geetansh Bamania will be among the selling shareholders in the OFS, along with investors including Accel, Edelweiss Discovery Fund, ValueQuest and Chiratae Ventures. Rentomojo operates a technology-led, full-stack direct-to-consumer platform that rents furniture and home appliances on a subscription basis. As of Sept 30, 2025, Rentomojo had 2.2 lakh live subscribers across 22 cities. TNN

Govt eyes flexible-fuel vehicles' faster rollout

Dipak Dash & Saksham Mehta | TNN

New Delhi: The ongoing West Asia conflict and concerns over energy supplies have prompted govt to explore faster rollout of flexible-fuel vehicles (FFVs), which can run on blended petrol as well as 100% ethanol. At a meeting called by the petroleum ministry on Saturday, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) flagged the need to address consumer concerns, particularly regarding the need to lower fuel costs as vehicle mileage decreases when using ethanol, for faster adoption.

People aware of the developments said since major car and two-wheeler manufacturers have their prototype FFV models ready, now govt needs to create the ecosystem for adoption of these vehicles. Govt has maintained that 20% ethanol blending in petrol has helped India save imports of around 4.5 crore barrels (700 crore litres) of crude annually.

Officials and industry sources said that FFVs are more viable option than increasing ethanol blending in petrol, as higher blending levels would impact performance of existing vehicles. A person aware of the discussions said, the meeting focused on enabling conditions for FFVs. **TOI** has learnt that the industry sought clear road map about the fuel stations that would dispense ethanol, compensation for mileage loss, which is around 27%-30% less than petrol. "Industry made a clear point that consumers should not feel 'cheated' for buying such vehicles on account of less mileage ," said a person who attended the meeting. Last year, petroleum minister Hardeep Singh Puri had written to FM Nirmala Sitharaman seeking GST parity of FFVs with EV. Currently, the GST for FFVs is 28% compared to 5% for EVs.

CRUDE CRISIS: A 'VIABLE OPTION'

- Flexible-fuel vehicles (FFVs) can run on blended petrol as well as on 100% ethanol

What industry wants:

1. Clear road map about the fuel stations that would dispense ethanol
2. Compensation for mileage loss, which is around 27-30% less than petrol
3. Incentive for people to buy FFVs considering these are expensive

- Officials and industry sources said that FFVs are a much more viable option than increasing ethanol blending in petrol, as higher blending levels would impact the performance of existing vehicles

WTO talks stall over e-comm moratorium

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New Delhi: WTO talks in Cameroon are deadlocked over a moratorium on e-commerce with the US seeking a five year freeze on countries for levying tax on digital downloads and streaming, while India is so far unwilling to agree to this period.

Starting from two years, it has indicated its willingness to go up to four, but the US is insisting on a freeze until June 2030, a person familiar with the ministerial level talks said.

But before ministers move to that the US and Brazil have to reach common ground on farm sector liberalisation. Talks between the US and Brazil are currently underway before ministers move to the issue of e-commerce. Here, the African countries have also demanded support and technical assistance before a final text can be agreed to.

For over 25 years, members of the WTO have upheld a vital rule: no customs duties on electronic transmissions. While India has used it as a bargaining chip at every ministerial meeting, this time the US demanded a perpetual moratorium till the rules are finalised so that there is policy certainty. But that's something that New Delhi is unwilling to offer. For India, the big win is managing to keep investment facilitation for development out of the WTO framework despite standing alone at the end.

Talks are expected to conclude in the next few hours as ministers have started leaving Cameroon and the ministerial meeting is not going into extra time. "If you don't catch the scheduled flight you will have to stay back here for two-three days, which ministers aren't willing to do," said an official.

Fisheries pact: India for 25 yr transition period

New Delhi: Indian delegation, led by commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal, has called for a 25-year transition period for developing countries under the second phase of the fisheries subsidies agreement, being negotiated among WTO members. AGENCIES

Vedanta to split into five listed cos next month

Vedanta will break up into five listed companies early next month under a years-long restructuring programme aimed at reducing debt, the Financial Times reported on Saturday, citing an interview with chairman Anil Agarwal.

A tribunal approved the oil-to-metals conglomerate's plan to split into five listed entities in Dec. After the demerger, the company will operate as Vedanta Limited, housing its base metals business. Vedanta Aluminium, Talwandi Sabo Power, Vedanta Steel and Iron, and Malco Energy will be the four other entities.

The combined market capitalisation of the five companies would be much higher than the conglomerate's current $27 billion, Agarwal said.

A private parent company controlled by Agarwal will retain about half of the shares in each of the new entities, he said. The plan, first floated in 2023, was opposed by govt which feared a break-up would hinder its ability to recover money owed. Agarwal on Sunday claimed that Vedanta had received written confirmation that it had won a bid for a Jaypee Group asset, but the decision was subsequently reversed, without elaborating on the reasons. AGENCIES

CONTRAPUNTO

If you've broken the eggs,
you should make the omelette

– ANTHONY EDEN

Second Shock Coming?

Iran & Houthis are gearing up for US ground troops. That could be real bad news for the world

A month into the Iran war, three things strongly hint at a possible US ground invasion. First, American troop deployments are increasing. Reports suggest Pentagon is drafting plans for weeks-long ops. These options, reportedly, include limited coastal raids, and the seizure of strategic Iranian islands, in Strait of Hormuz, and potentially even Kharg Island in Persian Gulf. Such moves would mark a huge bet on boots-on-the-ground engagement, a transition that, usually, means a deeper, more dangerous phase in wars. Of course, this will also intensify global energy shocks, and multiply casualties across all sides.

Second, IRGC has lowered the volunteer age for joining the war effort, to just 12. The announcement is stark and symbolic, in terrifying ways. It signals Tehran's expectation of a drawn-out confrontation, and the possibility of a manpower shortage. Nations rarely widen military recruitment pools, unless they anticipate attrition on a large scale. The message is clear: Iran is preparing for endurance, not just retaliation.

Third, Houthis in Yemen entered the war over the weekend, on Tehran's behalf. Would that include renewed attacks on Red Sea shipping? If that happens while Iran disrupts traffic through Strait of Hormuz, consequences for global energy markets could be severe. Together, these waterways handle a massive share of the world's oil flows. Experts have warned that oil price at or beyond $150 per barrel, will deliver huge shockwaves through inflation and supply chain disruptions. Houthis appear to be signalling Washington: any ground operation risks triggering a wider economic confrontation.

But what would be the endgame of a ground invasion? Regime change in Tehran appears to have receded as an immediate objective. A more plausible aim: securing Hormuz. That's something Gulf Arab states increasingly favour, after witnessing Iran's disruptive leverage. Yet, Tehran now insists on full sovereignty over Hormuz, and seems prepared to fight for it. Question, then, is: how long can Gulf states withstand sustained Iranian missile and drone strikes?

Most worryingly, Trump's objectives are unclear. Statements shift weekly, leaving allies and adversaries guessing. Some American conservatives, uneasy about the conflict, now argue for finishing the job quickly. Others believe weakening Iran could dismantle Tehran's network of allied militias, and reshape regional alignments. Mind you, all of this is guesswork by politicians and experts, who don't know what White House is thinking, which, in turn, may not know what, really, it wants anymore.

Who Wrote This?

AI takes leading role in the love story between readers and doubt, as authors/publishers are finding out

Textpocalypse is near, and it has put authenticity in crisis. If any text can be generated by AI, how do we know what is *authored*? Today, LLMs are becoming better and better at writing. Tomorrow, they may do something more. Right now, as Princeton researchers have established, AI systems mirror the human tendency to put a lower value on AI-generated content. One day, the machines might ditch this hierarchy. Humans might become agnostic about authorship. But that day is not here yet. Artificial hearts and knees are well and fine, but if someone's caught passing off artificial words as natural ones, all hell can break loose.

As Mia Ballard has just found out. In what is being called the landmark, first AI scandal to hit the Big Five of publishing houses, Hachette has pulled her horror novel, *Shy Girl*. Because the internet said, I spy AI has written this, in lines both neat and algorithm-kissed. But by no means is such Sherlocking foolproof. All the chatbotting we do, is changing our cadences, after all. Not unlike how Coleridge wrote *Kubla Khan*, when he was, as is politely described, under the influence. There is no way of knowing that those who say they are being totally original, are actually being so. Shakespeare, some pundits say, wasn't, but he also was. It's complicated.

In his essay, *Why AI will never supplant human novelists – or win the Booker Prize*, Ian Leslie answers this, in terms of the fundamental reality of being alive in the world. It's this that lets a novel about dragons feel deeply authentic. This is where authorship is more than a legal or commercial concern. We are engaging in a relationship with the consciousness behind the words. Strip that away, and doesn't literature become just an elaborate ventriloquism act? We read the stories, for the voices. They can lie, but they should not *be* a lie. Dear reader, this, too, is not written by AI.

Big bad bullies

On a malign force that has the world worrying

Jug Suraiya

Early warning signals are flashing. A big bad bully is rolling up its sleeves, and is all set to go into action, making people in many parts of the world fear what the bully will do, and when, and where, he'll do it.

The only predictable thing about the bully, say experts, whose job it is to predict the bully's behavioural patterns, is that the only thing it can be predicted to do is the unpredictable, being whimsical, capricious, and contrary to all rules of rationality and logic.

The bully in question is not a person, but a climatic phenomenon, called El Nino, which means Little Boy in Spanish, a name that was given to it by Peruvian fisherfolk, who first noted it in the 19th century.

El Nino has a sidekick, called the Southern Oscillation, SO for short, and they are tagged together as ENSO.

The disastrous duo work in tandem to hijack that huge weather machine, called the monsoon, on which hundreds of millions of farmers in India, and other parts of South Asia, are crucially dependent.

El Nino raises the temperature of the water in the south-central Pacific, while the SO increases the atmospheric temperature in the same region.

second*opinion*

This double whammy plays merry havoc with the wind currents that propel the rain-bearing monsoon clouds to the mainland. The result is that the monsoon, which is vital not just for farmers, but for entire national economies, gets inordinately delayed, or diverted, like those AI flights, the passengers of which are left clueless as to when or where they'll eventually end up.

Meteorologists in US and in India simultaneously have sounded alarm bells that El Nino, and its SO buddy, are preparing to launch their combined assault in early summer this year, spelling prolonged heat waves, drought, and crop failure, and are urging govts to batten down their hatches the best they can.

To begin with, a name change might be in order. El Nino is too cuddly cute for something that evokes fears of such epic fury. El Donaldo? And its SO comrade-in-arms, Bibi?

After The Pause, After The War

Iran can add to instability. But it can't use Hormuz as blackmail forever. US has no good options left. Israel will face a harder Iranian regime. Gulf Arabs have to rebuild, reassess ties. India has to ask itself tough questions

Indrani Bagchi

We are entering the second, more dangerous phase of the current Gulf war – four weeks down, one more week of a "pause" to go. Let's just say there are no good options left for anyone anymore.

Trump is amassing troops and carriers in the Gulf, while simultaneously signalling to allies, he won't go for ground operations inside Iran. He's being snarky about the Saudi ruler kissing his (Trump's) body parts, while apparently paying heed to Saudi and UAE, who are urging him to "finish the job" in Iran. He has consigned Nato to the trash heap, and tossed in Starmer and Takaichi Sanae, for good measure.

Will Trump continue the war, or will he extend the pause? Will US empty its arsenal first, or will Iran? Just the very fact that Iran has disproved every US and Israeli assumption, means the road ahead is less clear. Nobody knows what the next step may be, or even get an accurate sense of the damage so far. There is huge censorship of sharing visuals in Israel and Gulf states. Iran has had no internet for the past month anyway.

Meanwhile, Russian oil is free to buy, as is Iranian oil. China is being eerily quiet, but collecting vital electronic intelligence, about US military operations and strategy from Iranians. Iran now operates on China's BeiDou satellite system. Whether China takes Taiwan now or not, it knows a lot more about US military capabilities, than US knows about China's.

Iran is the Pirate of Hormuz, with its own toll-booth. A much weaker power, battered by almost 50 years of sanctions, wars, and strikes, Iran is following a horizontal escalation strategy, and, so far, controlling the escalation pathway in this war. Costs it is inflicting on the world, may yet be too much to bear. Houthis, Iran's Brahmastra, just joined the war, with attacks on Israel. Iran is indicating it's willing to expand the geography, and add to the instability quotient.

Iran has been under sustained air attack from US and Israel for the past month – it has lost leaders, infra, apparently almost 1,500 civilians, including kindergarteners. And, in many parts of the world, Iran today holds the sentiment on the street, just by being a power that stood up.

Everybody needs this war to end. Nobody looks close to doing so. But as military analyst John Spencer points out: "Be careful of analysts who speak in certainties, or rely on surface analogies. Iran is not Vietnam, Afghanistan, or Iraq. It is not 1968, 2002, or 2003. The context of each is fundamentally different.

Image: AI

Political objectives, from regime behaviour change to regime survival, are different. We know a lot about what has been struck. We do not fully know what remains. More importantly, we do not know what decisions will be made next, by either side. That uncertainty is not a flaw in analysis. It is the nature of war."

We can, and should, imagine a day after. This war is a full-blown Asian crisis. Vivian Balakrishnan, Singapore's foreign minister, spoke for every Asian country this week, when he pointed out that second and third order consequences from the "scarring" of the Persian Gulf, would be far worse for this continent. Take India. Today, we worry about LPG, tomorrow expats will be coming back, and that will be a whole new challenge.

Gulf Arabs are having their moment. Their "multi-alignment" game has made them the biggest casualty of this war. Their infra will take years of rebuilding. In terms of their global space, they will reassess all their relationships, with US, with Iran, and even with Israel, as this war winds down. That is an opportunity waiting for India.

Israel is great on technology, and unmatched, regionally, as a military power. But two changes have happened. Israel has serious competition from Ukraine's defence tech industry, which is more *au fait* with wars of the future. And, the new leadership in Tehran is likely to be more radical and more hardline. Iran's nuclear weapons future is all but assured.

Iran, though, is in danger of overplaying its hand. It can use Hormuz as strategic leverage only for so long. The world is already finding a way around it. Saudi Arabia has activated its east-west pipeline to load about 7mn barrels per day from its Yanbu port, on Red Sea. UAE has also activated its Fujairah pipeline. Assuming Houthis can't majorly disrupt Red Sea shipping, sooner or later, helium will find its way to semiconductor plants and MRI machines. Fertilisers will be made elsewhere.

India can take away certain truths.

- First, build capacity. Covid, Ukraine, Op Sindoor, Trump, and the Gulf war have exposed India's vulnerabilities and shortcomings.
- Second, we should double down on helping our friends in the Gulf rebuild, UAE, Qatar, and Oman, especially. That is a vital investment.
- Third, we must ask ourselves a simple question – Why is India Inc refusing to invest in India? In that answer lies India's future.
- Fourth, this is now a world without filters. Heads of state can be taken out to cripple a state. India needs to be prepared for extreme bad days.

Days when we were poor, and needed the bully pulpit to sound off against the perfidy of great powers, are over. Stay humble. Next election cycle is not the most important.

The writer is CEO, Ananta Centre, New Delhi. Views are personal

Uniform Civil Codes, Written By States, May Be Rewritten By Citizens

Gujarat, like Uttarakhand, is trying to radically change the relationship between law & family. But, results may end up looking quite different. Neither what proponents intend, nor what opponents fear

Akshat Agarwal

In India, the pace of legal change is generally slow. Yet, when change takes place, it is often radical, and overturns long-held assumptions. Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code was one such example. Now, Gujarat state assembly too has passed a similar uniform family code. More BJP-governed states may follow suit.

The question of uniform family law has long been a point of political contestation. Often framed as a choice between discriminatory religious family laws and gender equality, these new Codes actually raise more profound questions, about the relationship between the law and the family.

- At the outset, in shifting family law reforms to the state level, these Codes open a new direction, as most family law has primarily operated at the national level, until now. Uttarakhand's civil code was approved by the President and therefore overrode existing national family law. Gujarat's will probably follow a similar process, and both will comprehensively regulate the relationships of residents in the respective states.
- Both Codes introduce uniform rules for ***marriage and divorce***, across religious communities. Much of this was directed at provisions of Muslim personal law, which have been critiqued for discriminating against women. Yet, the Codes retain a tense relationship between secular and religious personal law.

For instance, the Codes do not have their own provisions for solemnising marriage. Instead, they merely require registration of marriages that have been solemnised, either according to religious customs or the Special Marriage Act, if it is an inter-faith marriage.

The notion that marriage derives legitimacy from religious law and customs, and not the State, was key to the Supreme Court's rejection of same-sex marriage in 2023. The Codes do not provide a neat answer to this question; thus, whether they comprehensively replace religious law remains uncertain.

This also has implications for heterosexual relationships. For instance, would a Hindu marriage that is validly registered under the Codes, but did not follow essential Hindu ceremonies, still be valid? Moreover, the Codes continue to exclude tribal communities.

- Both Codes stipulate detailed procedures for registering ***live-in relationships***, ostensibly to tackle concerns about violence and economic exploitation. Admittedly, questions of fact and evidence are notoriously difficult to prove in informal romantic relationships. But the Uttarakhand rules, released last year, contained extremely involved requirements through a 16-page form. Gujarat may issue similar rules. This raises genuine concerns about State surveillance of such relationships.

Image: AI

Legal requirements, such as the need to inform parents or guardians if one of the parties to the relationship is below 21, also raise constitutional concerns, as the Supreme Court has time and again held that adults above 18 have the right to be in relationships of their choice.

- Beyond adult romantic relationships, the Codes fundamentally reshape both states' ***inheritance and property*** regimes. They introduce uniform rules for wills, and for property passing to legal heirs in their absence. Unlike existing religious personal laws, these rules seek to treat men and women equally. For instance, they do away with Hindu law's peculiarities, such as requiring a woman's property to pass to her husband's family, instead of her parents. The Codes also seem to give courts new powers to deal with the allocation of property, irrespective of whether it is jointly or individually owned, at the time of divorce.

Most significantly, the Codes appear to do away with the distinction between separate and ancestral property in Hindu law, thereby effectively abolishing the concept of Hindu joint family property. What will this mean for Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) tax benefits? Even though tax exemptions are dealt with under central income tax law, the concept ultimately derives its legitimacy from underlying family law. Once the concept is done away with under family law, can it still be recognised in tax law?

- Moreover, the Codes apply to all residents, even those outside the state. However, what happens if a resident of one state owns property in another Indian state? Now that Uttarakhand and Gujarat have their own regime for inheritance, would the Codes override national and local rules governing immovable property in other states?
- Despite its many significant changes, the Codes still leave several questions unresolved, and their provisions raise constitutional concerns. In fact, constitutional challenges to Uttarakhand UCC are already pending before the high court in Nainital. How courts interpret and implement these Codes may thus determine their actual impact.

Apart from the courts, others may also shape the law, as they navigate its numerous formal requirements. Legal anthropologists often observe how the law in India takes a life of its own as individuals, communities, courts, and public officials navigate its many potential meanings. This may be especially true for these new uniform family codes, seeking to comprehensively regulate messy human relationships, which have long been intertwined with community interests. Ultimately, as these laws take a life of their own, their eventual impact may end up being neither what their proponents intended, nor what their opponents feared.

The writer is a doctoral candidate at Yale University. Views are personal

Calvin & Hobbes

Sacred*space*

It is good to love many things, for therein lies the true strength, and whosoever loves much performs much, and can accomplish much, and what is done in love is well done.

Vincent Van Gogh

Is Our Relationship With Food Karmic?

Brother Dao Hanh

Karm is not fate etched in stone. It is far more intimate and more immediate. It is the sum of our actions: of body, speech, and mind. Every habit we cultivate, every impulse we repeat, every choice we make, these weave the fabric of our karm. And food, perhaps more than we realise, sits at the centre of this tapestry. Our relationship with food is rarely just about hunger. It is about habit. We build patterns around food.

In the rush of modern life, eating has become mechanical. Meals are squeezed between meetings; hunger is replaced by habit; fullness is ignored. We often eat without awareness, and so we overeat. But overeating is not always about food. Sometimes, it is about escape. Emotional eating, reaching for something sweet not out of hunger, but to avoid discomfort, is a common pattern. Mindfulness changes this.

When we become aware, we begin to see 'am i really hungry, or am i avoiding something within?' Awareness is the first step towards balance. It allows us to listen to the body, recognise fullness, and understand the deeper currents beneath our cravings. Should a spiritual practitioner avoid certain foods? There are no rigid commandments, only awareness. When we are mindful, we begin to see consequences of our actions.

Take, for instance, eating meat. It is not about 'should' or 'shouldn't'; it is about seeing clearly, the chain of suffering, impact of our choices. And from that clarity, a natural shift may arise not from guilt, but from understanding. One may adopt a vegan diet, yet remain harsh in speech, restless in mind, or unkind to oneself. True nonviolence begins within. The way we relate to ourselves shapes how we relate to the world. Our outer actions are often reflections of our inner state.

THE SPEAKING TREE

There is no perfect way. Even walking on the earth may harm unseen life. Growing food involves disruption. What matters is direction. If one reduces harm, even slightly, one is already on the path. 'If i eat meat seven days a week and reduce it to six, i am moving towards nonviolence.'

It is not about perfection; it is about intention. Human beings are complex. A person may be deeply compassionate in many areas of life, yet unaware in others. Culture, upbringing, and circumstance all play a role. Judgement is less helpful than understanding. The Middle Way is a path free from extremes. Not rigid denial, not blind indulgence, but a balanced, aware way of living. Even in food, the Buddha's teaching was simple: accept what is offered, live with awareness, and reduce suffering where possible.

Is the way we eat karmic? Yes, but not because it is predetermined. It is karmic because it is created. With every meal, we reinforce a habit or reshape it. With every bite, we move unconsciously, or step into awareness. And perhaps, in that simple act of eating, lies a profound truth: We are not just consuming food, we are cultivating consciousness.

As told to Sonal Srivastava

Brother Dao Hanh is from Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village and was invited to India by Ahimsa Trust

Shah plays infiltration card to woo Assam

'Will Detect, Deport Every Illegal In 5 Yrs'

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Amit Shah at a public rally in Dhekiajuli on Sunday

Guwahati: Union home minister Amit Shah made "infiltration" BJP's central poll plank in Assam, urging voters Sunday to return a BJP-led govt for another five years to identify and expel every illegal immigrant staying in the state.

Addressing rallies in Dhekiajuli and Tihu, Shah said curbing illegal entry over the past decade was not enough. "We have stopped infiltration... but will Assam benefit just by stopping it? They will have to be thrown out," he said, calling for an "infiltrator-free, peaceful and developed Assam" where jobs and resources accrue to indigenous people.

Illegal immigration remains a flashpoint in Assam, which borders Bangladesh. Bengali-speaking Muslims of Bangladeshi origin — labelled as 'Miya' and estimated by the govt at more than one crore — were central to the anti-foreigner agitation of the 1980s.

Invoking the 1983 Lale Tapu killings, when seven Assamese youths were murdered by suspected infiltrators, Shah said: "That day remains a black chapter in Assam's history. Brave youths like Bhupen Deka and Prasanna Barua were murdered because they opposed infiltration. Today, under BJP-led govt, no infiltrator has the courage to kill the state's youth."

Shah linked infiltration to economic deprivation, claiming outsiders were "eating up jobs" and resources meant for the poor. "They have no right over Assam's land, grain or rice. Only when infiltrators are expelled will Assam be free of worries," he said. Shah also promised implementation of UCC and a ban on polygamy if BJP is re-elected.

Targeting Congress, he challenged Assam PCC chief, Gaurav Gogoi, to clarify his stand. "Are you with infiltrators or against them? Two things cannot happen at once," he said, urging voters to question Congress candidates.

BJP chief fails to show up to resign as MLA

Patna: BJP president **Nitin Nabin** did not resign as an MLA in Bihar as scheduled for Sunday and instead left for poll-bound Assam for an "urgent" engagement.

"Nitin Nabin had many programmes scheduled in Assam. He left by a chartered flight," BJP media incharge, Danish Iqbal, said. "Nabin still has time to resign," he added.

According to sources, Nabin was scheduled to resign as MLA in the official chamber of assembly speaker, Prem Kumar, who reached well in advance and waited for Nabin, who did not arrive.

"There was an emergency due to which Nabin had to leave. This led to postponement of his resignation," the speaker said, adding that Nabin could resign by Monday.

The speaker was attending a function in Delhi when he received a call from state BJP chief, Sanjay Saraogi, about the expected resignation. "So, I returned to Patna from Delhi on Saturday night," the speaker said.

Sources said Nabin may travel to Delhi to attend a meeting. —**Manoj Chaurasia**

Didi slams Shah, asks, 'Are they plotting to kill me?'

Purulia: "I have returned from the brink of death," Bengal CM **Mamata Banerjee** said on Sunday, a day after Union home minister Amit Shah released a political "chargesheet" against the Trinamool govt and alleged the TMC chief has "always played the politics of the victim card".

"They (BJP) say I roam around with bandages. I fought death many times. Why don't they go and check medical reports? Don't they have any shame?" the CM retorted at a rally in Purulia's Manbazar. "Even during the previous polls, you hurt my leg. Despite that, I travelled around in a wheelchair with a cast on as I am strong... Are they planning to kill me? Their words are proof that they are hatching a conspiracy."

Slamming Shah's political "chargesheet", Mamata said, "A big neta from Delhi filed a chargesheet against TMC. Who are you to file a chargesheet? You should be chargesheeted." She criticised Shah, referring to the deportation of Indians from the US last year. "Where were you when Gujaratis were being pushed back from the US with ropes around their waists?" she asked.

Alleging that BJP functionaries are not true followers of any religion, Mamata said, "They come to office by inciting riots." —**Tanuja Singh Deo**

EC suspends 3 CAPF men for playing carrom at TMC office

EC suspended three CAPF personnel after a purported video went viral showing them playing carrom inside a TMC office at Suri in Birbhum on Sunday. "The personnel have been removed from poll duty. We have initiated an inquiry and the authenticity of the video is being checked," an EC official said. While BJP's Jagannath Chatterjee and Congress district chief Sanjay Adhikari condemned the incident, TMC neta Malay Mukherjee said, "Casually interacting with TMC is not a crime." PTI

Stalin's DMK woos one & all with over 500 poll promises

Counters ADMK Fridge Vow With ₹8,000 Pledge

Chennai: Tamil Nadu CM **MK Stalin** Sunday released the DMK manifesto containing a whopping 515 poll promises targeting one and all, topping it with a new "Illatharasi (home maker)" scheme evidently aimed at countering AIADMK's announcement of a free refrigerator for all rice ration card holders.

"Poll manifesto is the superstar for this election," Stalin said after releasing the manifesto at DMK headquarters in Chennai.

BATTLEGROUND TAMIL NADU

Many of the welfare schemes implemented by the DMK govt from 2021 to 2026 were promised again but with an enhanced number of beneficiaries and financial limits. For instance, the free breakfast scheme for primary school students of govt and govt-aided schools will be extended till eighth standard. By this extension, around 15 lakh students will be benefitted.

Under the "Illatharasi" scheme, a household which doesn't fall under the ambit of income tax, will be given a coupon for Rs 8,000 which can be used to either purchase new or exchange household appliances.

The manifesto projected FDI of Rs 18 lakh crore in the next five years, which would generate employment for 50 lakh people.

It promises to provide free modern electric pump sets without meters for more than 20 lakh farmers. This is one step ahead of providing free electricity to farmers in 1989 by former CM M Karunanidhi. Also, for the welfare of fishermen, the monthly assistance will be hiked from Rs 8,000 to Rs 12,000.

Vijay targets youth; vows monthly aid, loans

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Chennai: TVK chief Vijay announced the list of party candidates for Tamil Nadu assembly polls on Sunday, pitting himself against DMK MLAs R D Sekhar and Inigo Irudhyaraj from Perambur in Chennai and Trichy East, respectively.

He said the fight was between DMK and TVK. He said, "The DMK alliance was formed like sticking broken glass pieces together or stitching torn clothes."

Vijay promised Rs 4,000 in monthly aid to unemployed graduates above 29, along with collateral-free education loans of up to Rs 20 lakh, Rs 25 lakh entrepreneurship loans, and job safeguards for Tamils.

Key TVK functionaries, including general secretary N Anand (T Nagar), Aadhav Arjuna (Villivakkam), treasurer Venkatraman (Mylapore), and deputy general secretary Rajmohan (Egmore), will contest from seats in Chennai, a DMK stronghold. V S Babu and D Selvam will take on CM M K Stalin in Kolathur and deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin in Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni, respectively.

Cong vows cash for women & probe into Zubeen 'murder'

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Guwahati: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge unveiled Sunday the party's Assam election manifesto — branded a "Guarantee Letter" — promising unconditional cash transfers to women, Rs 50,000 support for women entrepreneurs and a Rs 25 lakh cashless health cover for every family, while launching a sharp attack on CM Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge addresses a public meeting, at Nowboicha on Sunday

BATTLEGROUND ASSAM

Kharge promised a probe into what he termed the "murder" of Assamese music icon Zubeen Garg. "If we form govt, we will investigate how Zubeen was murdered and who were responsible. We will conduct the inquiry in 100 days," he said, adding results would be made public within that timeline.

The document, released at a rally in Naoboicha in Lakhimpur district, seeks to counter BJP's welfare outreach that has delivered electoral gains in past contests. Kharge framed the contest as one between "real and fake Congress" and accused Sarma of betrayal. "This is not BJP's fight because no BJP person accepts him... he has forcefully entered," he said, alleging Sarma left Congress "for his own survival" and was "installed" as CM by PM Modi despite 2021 polls being fought in Sarbananda Sonowal's name.

SP launches 2027 campaign, vows welfare schemes

Noida: A day after PM Narendra Modi inaugurated Noida International Airport in Jewar, ex-CM **Akhilesh Yadav** chose the city to launch SP's 2027 assembly poll campaign — with a welfare-heavy pitch aimed at financial assistance for women, farmers, youth and backward communities.

At the party's 'Samajwadi Samanta Bhaichara' rally in Dadri, the SP national president unveiled 'Stree Samman Samriddhi Yojna', promising a financial support of Rs 40,000 for women if voted to form govt. He then coupled it with assurances on land compensation, jobs and social justice.

The rally was politically loaded not just for its timing but for its message too. Yadav framed SP's campaign around the PDA plank, 'Pichda, Dalit, Alpasankhyak', saying only a "PDA govt" will restore dignity to communities that had long been ignored.

Referring to BJP's "400 paar" slogan in the last LS polls, Yadav alleged that the party wanted a bigger mandate to alter the Constitution, but "people taught them a lesson". —**Jaideep Deogharia**

Voters left in limbo as appeal process remains unclear

▶ Continued from page 1

The notification doesn't mention a timeline or explain procedural details. There is no information on which offices will handle offline appeals.

Rojina Khatun, a villager in East Burdwan, is among the lakhs worried about whether she stands a chance of getting into the rolls. "I don't know anything about technology to file an appeal online by myself. And we are yet to know when the offline mode will be activated. I am in touch with our BLO, who has asked me to keep all relevant documents ready," she said.

Md Nazrul Islam, a resident of Suti in Murshidabad, visited the DM's office to enquire about what he should do. Md Jomadar Sheikh, from Dhulian in the same district, said a judicial tribunal was his only hope.

Jahima Khatun's name was deleted because her father's name was misspelt in one document. Her father, Akshad Ali Sheikh, said, "Before filing an appeal, we want to be clear about which documents we need to submit."

In Kolkata, Shahnawaz Ismail, who lives near Tiretta Bazar in Jorasanko assembly constituency, said he would file an appeal only after being sure everything was in order. "I heard that the appeals portal is live. I don't want to make any mistake while filing an appeal." A cousin of his is in the same boat.

BLOs are being deluged by queries and requests for help. "I received multiple calls from voters who wanted to know how to file an appeal," said Bappaditya Guha, a BLO in Jorasanko. "The names of 46 people in the 'part' assigned to me have been deleted. I followed all instructions from EC and uploaded voters' documents on the BLO app. We are answerable to the voters; they trusted us and gave us their documents."

EC released a fourth supplementary list Sunday with around two lakh names from among the close to 60 lakh that were under judicial adjudication. Of the 40 lakh cases disposed of by judicial officers, around 18 lakh have been rejected. The four supplementary lists feature around 35 lakh names, including both individuals who have had their voter status reinstated and those who have been disenfranchised.

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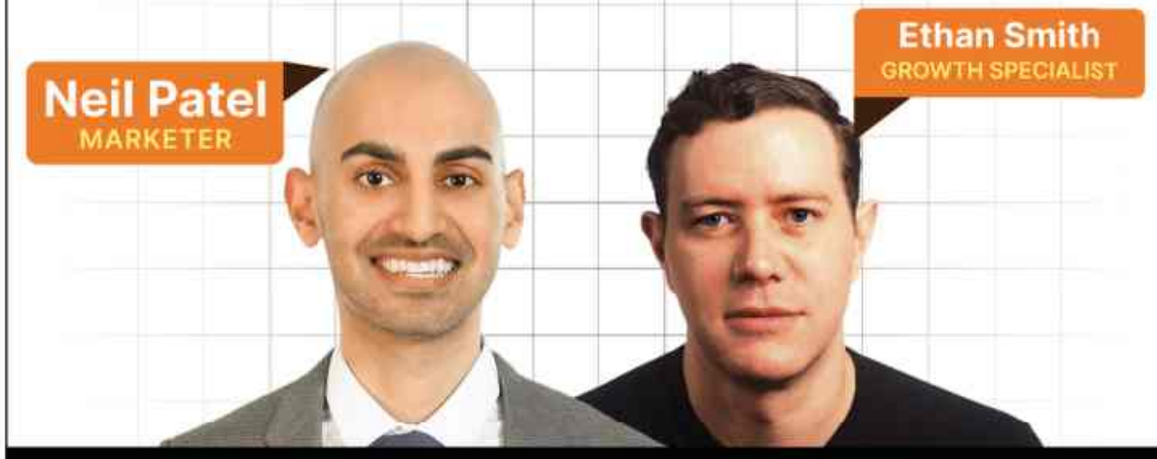

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TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2026

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN PERFORMS 'STREETS OF MINNEAPOLIS' AT 'NO KINGS PROTEST' IN MINNESOTA TO HONOUR ANTI-ICE DEMONSTRATORS

THERE CANNOT BE A CRISIS NEXT WEEK. MY SCHEDULE IS ALREADY FULL — HENRY KISSINGER

JAMIE DORNAN REVEALS HIS PASSION FOR COLLECTING ROCKS THAT LOOK LIKE POTATOES IN 'SNL UK' MONOLOGUE

US preps for ground invasion; ready to respond, says Iran

3,500 Troops In Region, 10k More May Be Deployed

Chidanand Rajghatta & Agencies

What began as a "little excursion" into Iran — as described by President Trump — is now edging toward a full-scale invasion of the country, with US officials signalling the start of a broader military campaign, including the potential seizure of Kharg Island — Tehran's oil export hub. In calibrated leaks over the weekend, US officials revealed preparations for a "final blow" against Iran, including movement of thousands of troops into the region. While the administration has stopped short of confirming an invasion, the scale and tempo of troop movements suggest a widening conflict over the next few days — unless the leaks constitute a monumental bluff or psy-ops to spook Iran.

A top Iranian official warned the US against a ground invasion, saying its troops would be set "on fire." Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf accused US of sending messages about talks while at the same time planning to send in troops, adding that Tehran was ready to respond.

According to US Central Command, over 3,500 additional US troops have already been deployed, including roughly 2,500 Marines aboard the USS Tripoli (LHA-7), an amphibious assault ship capable of launching F-35 stealth fighters and Osprey aircraft. The Pentagon has also moved elements of 82nd Airborne Division and is considering deploying up to 10,000 additional troops.

Amphibious assets, including the USS Boxer (LHD-4), are en route, underscoring the administration's effort to build "maximum optionality," as officials repeatedly describe it.

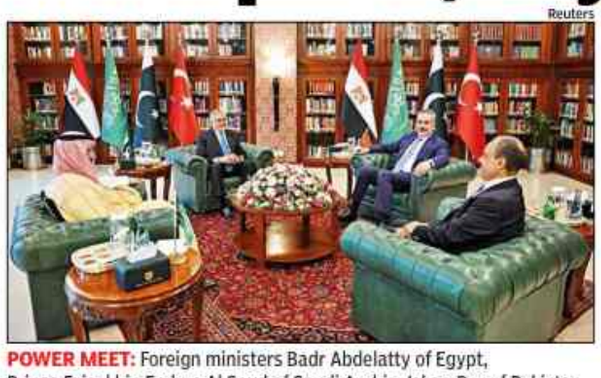
Defence analysts say the objective of seizing Kharg is not territorial conquest in the traditional sense, but about choking off Tehran's revenues, controlling maritime routes, and denying Iran the ability to threaten shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

Roughly a fifth of the world's oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz, and any disruption has immediate ripple effects. Already, the conflict has driven up fuel prices, disrupted commercial aviation, and rattled global markets.

By targeting Iran's infrastructure, Washington could reshape global energy markets and indirectly pressure major buyers such as China, which relies heavily on Iranian oil. Some analysts argue the move is tied to a wider strategy aimed at constraining Beijing's strategic options, including its posture toward Taiwan.

Military experts concede that any attempt to seize Kharg Island would be complex and risky. Unlike inland targets, the island is exposed, making it vulnerable to Iranian missile strikes, drone attacks, and naval harassment. Holding it would require sustained air superiority and naval protection, as well as a steady flow of reinforcements and supplies. Defence experts also warn that even a limited military operation could escalate quickly.

Reuters



POWER MEET: Foreign ministers Badr Abdelatty of Egypt, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, Ishaq Dar of Pakistan and Hakan Fidan of Turkiye in Islamabad, Pakistan, on Sunday

US sees first combat loss of E-3 jet in missile strike at Saudi base

An Iranian missile strike on a base in Saudi Arabia damaged several military jets and destroyed a valuable E-3 Sentry early warning and control aircraft — the first known combat loss for that type. The roughly $300 million plane was hit in an attack on Prince Sultan Air Base in recent days, according to a person familiar with the matter. Unverified photos of the jet showed its tail completely severed, rendering it unflyable.

The so-called AWACS plane, which has a rotating radar disc mounted above its fuselage, is used to spot distant threats and direct other combat aircraft. It provides a powerful advantage, and although the US operates more than 60 and can replace the loss, the destruction of one is costly.

"It's a big deal," said Peter Layton, a former Royal Australian Air Force officer. "It highlights that large aircraft are vulnerable on the ground and need active defence. That is hard to do all the time, sometimes it fails."

US Central Command did not respond to a request for comment on the loss of the aircraft. Three other Boeing Co. Sentry aircraft have been lost in accidents since it was introduced in the late 1970s. Like the KC-135 Stratotanker, the plane is based on the airframe that also produced the 707 passenger jet. BLOOMBERG

Catholic cardinal blocked from Jerusalem church on Palm Sunday

Jerusalem: Israeli police prevented the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem from marking Palm Sunday at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre "for the first time in centuries," the Patriarchate said, with police citing security concerns linked to the Iran war.

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa and Friar Francesco Ielpo were stopped by police while walking to the church, built on the site where Christians believe Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem said. "As a result, and for the first time in centuries, the Heads of the Church were prevented from celebrating the Palm Sunday Mass at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre," it said in a statement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement: "There was no malicious intent whatsoever, only concern for his (Pizzaballa's) safety and that of his party." He said preparations were in place to allow church leaders to worship at the church in the coming days. Israeli police said all holy sites in Jerusalem's Old City – including those sacred to Christians, Muslims and Jews – had been closed to worshippers since the start of the US-Israeli war on Iran, particularly locations without bomb shelters. REUTERS

HOW IRAN WAR HAS RIPPLED ACROSS THE WORLD

- **Australia planting less wheat.** Farmers are worried as fertiliser prices rise. A third of the world's fertiliser is shipped through the Strait of Hormuz. US has lifted sanctions on Venezuela to export fertiliser
- **South Korea urges all to take shorter showers.** Much of the energy they use to heat water comes from West Asia
- **Thailand's premier wears short-sleeved shirts to work** and urges others to do the same. Govt offices asked to cap air conditioner use to save energy
- To conserve energy, the **Philippines asks civil servants to skip the elevator,** and **Egypt curtails shopping hours** five days a week
- **Clothes pile up at airports in Bangladesh.** Textile exports have also been disrupted by the cancelled flights
- **Cancer drugs may not reach on time.** Shutdowns in cargo hubs like Dubai (UAE) and Doha (Qatar) threaten medicines that must be kept refrigerated
- **Track suits, made from petrochemicals, could get more expensive** amid rising fuel prices
- **Party balloons may be harder to find.** Qatar produces a third of the world's helium, a by-product of natural gas
- With missiles targeting Gulf nations, **Formula-1 races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia were scrapped**
- Shakira and Christina Aguilera and others postpone concerts over security concerns
- **Buying a house in the US is more expensive.** Oil prices are driving fears of higher inflation, pushing up mortgage rates
- **Sugar may get costlier** as sugar mills in Brazil, the world's biggest producer, may switch to making more biofuel to cash in on high energy prices
- **Gold has fallen** for myriad reasons including speculative investors cashing out gold investments
- To curb commutes and conserve fuel, **Sri Lanka declares Wednesdays a public holiday,** and **Laos adopts a 3-day school schedule**

Source: NYT

Photo: AP

Protesters march toward the US embassy in Seoul, South Korea during a rally against the US and Israel attacks on Iran on Sunday

Bibi: Military to expand security zone in Lebanon

Jerusalem: Israel's PM **Benjamin Netanyahu** said on Sunday that he had ordered the military to "further expand" a security zone in Lebanon as Israel continues its campaign in the neighbouring country. "This is intended to definitively neutralise the threat of invasion (by Hezbollah militants) and to keep anti-tank missile fire away from the border." Netanyahu said that Hezbollah still retained "residual capabilities" to fire rockets at Israel, but the group had been hit by Israeli forces.

'Iran's ambassador won't leave Lebanon': Iran's ambassador will not leave Lebanon despite being declared persona non grata and ordered to leave the country by Sunday, an Iranian diplomatic source said. Hezbollah has denounced the decision while Berri's Amal party joined Hezbollah ministers in boycotting a cabinet session in protest at the order to expel Mohammad Reza Sheibani. Beirut has accused him of "interfering in Lebanon's internal politics". AGENCIES

Toothless Iran? Missile and drone hits show it can still inflict pain

Nicholas Kulish, Helene Cooper, Isabel Kershner & Erika Solomon

An Iranian strike on a US military base in Saudi Arabia, injured two dozen troops. Two drones targeting a port in Oman, and a strike on the Kuwait International Airport. Workers at an aluminium facility in Abu Dhabi were wounded by a missile and drone attack.

President Donald Trump has said that the US has all but obliterated Iranian military capabilities, portraying Iran as a defanged adversary. The US military says that the number of attacks Iran has launched has declined by roughly 90% from the opening days of the war, and the Israeli military says it has rendered roughly 70% of Iran's hundreds of missile launchers inoperable.

But a series of attacks against Israel and Persian Gulf countries in the past several days is only the latest evidence that Iran retains enough missiles and drones to destabilise the region and inflict a punishing cost on its foes, while signalling that, contrary to Trump's declarations, it is still very much in the fight.

Millions of Israelis are still rushing into bomb shelters day and night to take cover from Iranian missile fire. The daily routine of sirens and booms sows fear and paralysis. Seven people were injured in central Israel on Thursday following missile barrages, according to the country's emergency service. Surveillance video captured footage of two people rushing out of harm's way before a silver car they were standing near exploded then pinwheeled through the air. On Friday, a Tel Aviv man was killed by a bomblet from a missile with a cluster-munition warhead.

Even when Iranian weapons are intercepted, they can still inflict damage. Two people were killed in Abu Dhabi on Thursday when they were struck by shrapnel falling from an intercepted missile.

Iran still likely possesses thousands of Shahed drones and could still have hundreds of ballistic missiles despite American and Israeli strikes over the past four weeks, one US official said. But the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss military capabilities, cautioned that it is impossible to know for sure, as US intelligence on Iranian capability is limited.

Statements from the US military have been carefully worded. Admiral Brad Cooper, commander of US Central Command, said Wednesday that "Iran's drone and missile launch rates are down 90%," courtesy of American and Israeli strikes. That is not the same as saying those strikes have eliminated 90% of Iranian drones and missiles.

Kelly A Grieco, senior fellow at the Stimson Center, a foreign affairs research institute in Washington, says the number of strikes may not matter as much as how effectively Iran is using its arsenal. Grieco has analysed open-source data on Iran's salvos and, while cautioning that the numbers are inexact, found that Iran's hit rate has increased as the war has progressed, more than doubling since March 10.

The wave of Iranian strikes showed no signs of letting up this weekend, with missiles and drones causing damage across the Gulf region, disabling a radar at the Kuwait airport and injuring a worker and damaging a crane at the Omani port. And the willingness of the Houthis to strike at Israel on Saturday suggests more firepower will be brought to bear against Iran's enemies. NYT

Reuters

Smoke rises after an Iranian missile hit in southern Israel on Sunday

Munir in regular contact with US veep: Report

▶Continued from P 1

Two other Pakistani sources said Turkiye, Egypt and Saudi Arabia could form a consortium to manage oil flows through the waterway, and had asked Pakistan to participate. The proposal for a management consortium had been discussed with the US and Iran, the sources said. The first Pakistani source said the country's army chief Asim Munir had been in regular contact with US Vice President J D Vance.

Egypt's and Pakistan's foreign ministries did not respond to a request for comment. The Saudi govt media office and the White House did not reply to a comment request. A Turkish source said Ankara's priority was securing a ceasefire. "Ensuring the safe passage of ships could serve as an important confidence-building measure," the source said. AGENCIES

Iran attacks aluminium plants in UAE and Bahrain; several hurt

Tehran: Iran claimed on Sunday attacks on two major aluminium plants in the Gulf, further raising the economic stakes of West Asia war.

Iran fired a volley of missiles and drones at plants belonging to two of the world's largest aluminium producers in Bahrain and the UAE, the country's Revolutionary Guards said, targeting what they described as industries linked to the US military. Emirates Global Aluminium (EGA) said an Iranian attack wounded six and caused significant damage to its plant, while Bahraini state media said two Aluminium Bahrain (ALBA) employees were injured in a second attack.

The attacks are another blow to the region's commodity industry, with producers mostly prevented from exporting by the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Aluminium prices, already rising before the conflict, have gained further as traders and buyers focus on the potential for tighter markets and shrinking global inventories. West Asia accounts for around 9% of global supply and much of that is now blocked inside Hormuz. Higher commodity prices will weigh on global economies, according to Goldman Sachs Group.

FRESH TROUBLE

EGA is still assessing damage from the attack on its Al Taweelah site located at the Khalifa Port industrial zone in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, the company said in a statement. It confirmed that several employees were injured, but declined to say whether operations at the facility had been suspended.

As the biggest non-energy industrial company in the UAE, EGA operates two smelters, one each in the emirates of Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The Al Taweelah site is halfway between the cities of Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the Khalifa Economic Zone along the Persian Gulf. The Dubai plant is in the Jebel Ali port and free-zone area. The Al Taweelah smelter produced 1.6 million tonnes of cast metal in 2025.

The company had substantial metal stock offshore when Israel and the US began their war on Iran last month as well as in some overseas locations, according to the statement. It's used that external product to help meet customer demand. EGA has been a major international investor and is part of the UAE's pledge to spend $1.4 trillion in the US over the next decade. The UAE has been the second-largest aluminium supplier to the US, and is building the first new American smelter in decades in Oklahoma. AGENCIES

PIO arrested for ramming car into pedestrians in UK

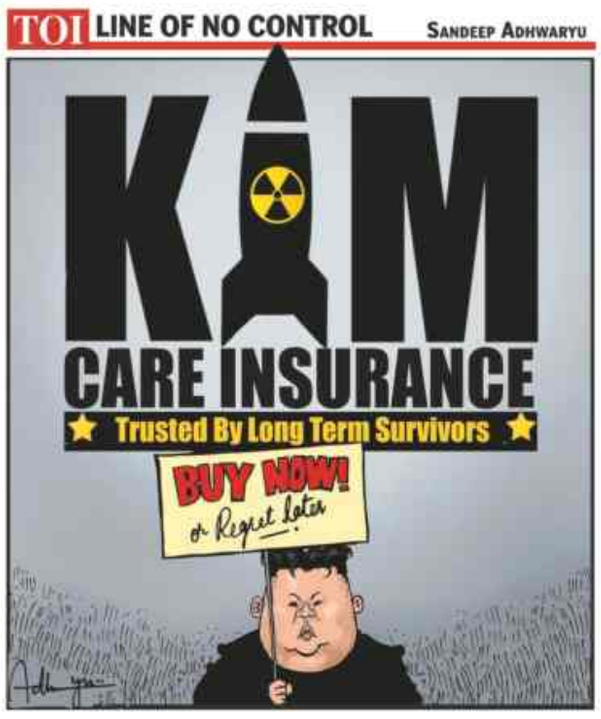
London: An Indian-origin man has been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder after seven people were seriously injured when a car drove into pedestrians in England, police said on Sunday. The incident occurred on Saturday at 9.30pm in a city centre street, Friar Gate, Derby, after a car crashed into pedestrians.

Police said that seven people were injured in the incident. "A car struck several people in Friar Gate at about 9.30 pm on Saturday, 28 March," a statement from Derbyshire police said. "He remains in police custody," it added.

The city police have still not revealed the identity of the accused. The other charges of his arrest include causing serious injury through dangerous driving, inflicting grievous bodily harm with intent, and dangerous driving.

The injured were treated at the scene by ambulance crews and taken to Royal Derby Hospital and Queen's Medical Centre in Nottingham. The victims of rash driving sustained a range of serious but not life-threatening injuries, police said. "We can confirm that contrary to online speculation, no one died in the incident," it said. "The investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident is ongoing, and we are keeping an open mind as to the motives," it added. PTI

TOI LINE OF NO CONTROL — SANDEEP ADHWARYU



Nepal court extends ex-PM detention in crackdown case

Kathmandu: A Nepal court on Sunday extended the detention of former prime minister **KP Sharma Oli** and his home minister Ramesh Lekhak by five days. They were arrested on Saturday over alleged involvement in a deadly crackdown on the 2025 protests that ousted him.

Kathmandu district court information officer Deepak Kumar Shrestha noted that the court has also said Oli should get the medical care he requires. The Supreme Court is due on Monday to consider a petition for Oli and Lekhak's release, court spokesman Arjun Prasad Koirala said.

The arrests came after an inquiry commission recommended that Oli and other officials be prosecuted for failing to stop security forces from firing on demonstrators.

Former energy minister arrested

Former energy minister Deepak Khadka was also arrested on Sunday "in a case relating to money laundering", central investigation bureau spokesman Shiva Kumar Shrestha said.

Khadka has been accused of receiving financial benefits in exchange for facilitating licences and contracts for projects, it said. AFP

WORLD DIGEST

AFP

A humpback whale in shallow coastal waters in Wismar Bay in the Baltic Sea, northern Germany on Sunday. The whale, stranded since early this week off Timmendorfer Strand, had freed itself and swum into deeper waters on Friday. While searching for a way out, the whale has now become stranded for the third time and shows no signs of leaving

N Korea conducts engine test for missile capable of targeting US

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un observed a test of a solid-fuel engine for weapons capable of reaching the US mainland, and called it a significant development boosting his country's military arsenal, state media reported Sunday. Some experts speculate the claim may be an exaggeration. Missiles with built-in solid propellants are easier to move and conceal their launches than liquid-fuel weapons, which in general must be fuelled before lift-offs and cannot last long.

Russian tanker nears Cuba, defying US oil blockade

A Russian oil tanker subject to US sanctions is scheduled to arrive in Cuba on Monday, challenging a de facto American fuel blockade of the energy-starved island, shipping data shows. The Anatoly Kolodkin, which is carrying 730,000 barrels of crude, was north of Haiti on Sunday as it headed towards the port of Matanzas in western Cuba, according to maritime analytics firm Kpler. It was escorted by a Russian navy ship across the English Channel.

Hundreds flee as fire rips through German club

Hundreds of people were evacuated from a nightclub in southwest Germany after a fire broke out, police said Sunday. Police said the fire began around 1.45am GMT in the nightclub in Kehl, which lies along the border with France. The fire went on to "spread over the whole building", police added.

Armed world: Trump's war with Iran may be ushering in a new nuke age

Donald Trump's willingness to attack adversaries while rattling allies is threatening to push the world into a new nuclear age. From the North Atlantic to the West Pacific, govts are debating more publicly than before whether they, too, must get the bomb.

Germany and Poland, which have long been satisfied to sit under the US nuclear umbrella, have in the wake of Trump's musings about taking Greenland welcomed French overtures about extending the country's own strategic deterrent. China and Russia, both longstanding members of the exclusive club of nuclear-armed nations, have raised alarm about the risk of weapons proliferation in Japan and South Korea, even as they upgrade their own arsenals.

During the same week that the US president issued an ultimatum to Iran's leadership to surrender its nuclear programme, his administration was circulating a report giving its regional rival, Saudi Arabia, potential access to uranium-enrichment and -reprocessing technology, according to documents seen by Bloomberg.

While only nine nations are considered nuclear-armed, over 20 others have energy programmes that could allow them to develop the bomb

In Jan, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists advanced its "Doomsday Clock" to 85 seconds to midnight – the closest to catastrophe it's been. They cited among other things Trump's attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities and his efforts to build his "Golden Dome" missile shield, as well as the expiration of the last arms control treaty between the US and Russia.

"The possible acquisition of such weapons of mass destruction is openly discussed, even in countries that have pledged never to possess them," Rafael Mariano Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said in an interview.

While only nine nations are currently considered nuclear-armed states, more than 20 others have energy programmes, industrial bases and engineering expertise that could allow them to begin climbing the ladder to the bomb.

The scramble is fuelled by the belief that forgoing nuclear weapons leaves nations exposed, with Libya, Ukraine and now Iran underscoring the consequences. While possessing a nuclear arsenal is no guarantee against attack, they do raise the stakes of one. The more nations that get the bomb, the harder it is for big powers to control how it's used, and the more dangerous the world becomes. Even in Japan, a senior official who advises PM Sanae Takaichi said that Japan should have the bomb amid heightened tensions with China.

UN meetings to review the 56-year-old Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons next month are expected to lay bare growing resistance from nuclear-armed states to its restrictions. Trump has often warned about the dangers of nuclear weapons and, as recently as Feb 2025, floated cutting America's stockpile and opening talks with Russia and China on disarmament. But his actions in Iran have made them look more valuable. BLOOMBERG

TIMES SPORT | THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU
MARCH 30, 2026

IPL 2026

"MS KNOWS HIS GAME SO WELL. WE DON'T NEED TO HAVE A LOT OF CONVERSATIONS. WE JUST TALK ABOUT LITTLE ADJUSTMENTS. A LITTLE BIT OF FOOT MOVEMENT HERE, OR A BIT OF A SWING CHANGE THERE. HE HAS A GREAT FEEL FOR THE GAME."
—Michael Hussey | CSK batting coach on Dhoni

JINX ENDS, JOURNEY BEGINS

Rohit, Rickelton 50s Help MI Chase Down KKR's 220 With Five Balls To Spare, End 13-Yr Run Of Losing IPL Opener

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Mumbai: At last, the Mumbai Indians have broken their dubious habit of losing the opening match of the Indian Premier League, ending a jinx that had stretched from 2013 to 2025. On Sunday night at the Wankhede Stadium, that sequence looked set to continue when the Kolkata Knight Riders piled up a daunting 220 for four after being put in to bat. However, a blistering opening partnership between Ryan Rickelton and Rohit Sharma ensured MI chased down the target comfortably to seal a six-wicket win with five balls to spare.

Rickelton smashed 81 off 43 balls (4x4, 8x6) while Rohit rolled back the years with a ferocious 78 off 38 balls (6x4, 6x6). Their 148-run opening stand off just 72 balls effectively shut KKR out of the contest, even though a few late wickets briefly slowed the hosts.

The emphatic chase, coming in front of a packed Wankhede, gave MI fans plenty to cheer and highlighted a growing trend in IPL 2026 — bowlers are increasingly finding life difficult. The first two days of the season have already seen 200-plus totals chased down with ease, underlining how heavily the balance has tilted in favour of batters.

In an interesting tactical move, India's T20 captain Suryakumar Yadav was used as an Impact Player and chipped in with a brisk 16 off eight balls, while skipper Hardik Pandya finished the chase with an unbeaten 18 off 11 balls.

Rohit was at his vintage best, unleashing trademark pulls and lofted drives, with a towering six off Kartik Tyagi standing out. Rickelton, meanwhile, dominated the powerplay with clean hitting that kept MI ahead of the asking rate throughout.

KKR's troubles were compounded when captain Ajinkya Rahane, who had earlier struck a fine 67 off 40 balls, left the field due to cramps, forcing vice-captain Rinku Singh to take over leadership duties. The form of lead spinner Varun Chakravarthy will also be a concern after he went wicketless for 48 runs in four overs.

Earlier, Rahane and young opener Angkrish Raghuvanshi (51 off 29 balls) powered KKR with aggressive fifties, while Finn Allen (37 off 18) and Rinku Singh (33 not out off 21) provided valuable support to take the visitors to a formidable total.

On a night dominated by batters, Shardul Thakur stood out with the ball. Making a strong debut for MI, the 'Palghar Express' returned figures of 3 for 39 in four overs and was the most effective bowler in a high-scoring game that saw even Jasprit Bumrah go wicketless (0-38 in four overs).

Thakur provided the crucial breakthrough by dismissing Allen in the sixth over and later removed big-money signing Cameron Green and Rahane with clever variations and slower deliveries, preventing KKR from pushing beyond reach.

KKR had earlier raced to 69 in just 32 balls through Rahane and Allen. Rahane, playing his first competitive game in three months, looked in complete control, picking length early and striking the ball fluently through covers and over the infield. Allen complemented him with an aggressive approach, taking apart debutant Afghan spinner Allah Mohammad Ghazanfar and hammering boundaries at will, while Rahane's assault on Hardik in a 26-run over set the tone for a big total.

In the end, though, MI's explosive opening stand ensured that only sixes rained at the Wankhede — and the fans walked away happy as the hosts finally managed to bury a 13-year-old hoodoo of not winning the opening game.

158 Runs scored — Kolkata (78) and Mumbai (80) — the most involving these two teams in an IPL match in the powerplay.

81 Ryan Rickelton has registered his highest IPL score, bettering the 62 not out vs KKR at Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai on March 31, 2025.

3/39 Shardul Thakur, for the first time, has claimed the top three Kolkata wickets to fall in an IPL game. His figures are the second best against KKR behind the 3-38 at Dubai on Oct 15, 2021.

Stats: Rajesh Kumar

NO HOME BLUES: Shardul Thakur

Pics: KK Choudhary

HITMAN SPECIAL
78 RUNS
38 BALLS
6 4s
6 6s
205.26 SR
23 Balls faced by Rohit Sharma to race to the 50 — his quickest in terms of balls in the IPL, bettering the 25 balls taken by him vs CSK in the final at Eden Gardens, Kolkata on May 24, 2015.

HOLD IT: Rohit Sharma pulled out some vintage strokes from the closet during his 78 vs KKR

SCOREBOARD

KKR: Ajinkya Rahane c Pandya b Thakur 67, Finn Allen c Tilak Varma b Thakur 37, Cameron Green c Rutherford b Thakur 18
Angkrish Raghuvanshi c Tilak Varma b Pandya 51, Rinku Singh not out 33, Ramandeep Singh not out 4. **Extras:** (LB-2, NB-1, W-7) 10
Total: (For 4 wickets in 20 overs) 220
Fall of wickets: 1-69, 2-109, 3-145, 4-205
Bowling: Trent Boult 4-0-38-0, Hardik Pandya 3-0-39-1, AM Ghazanfar 4-0-51-0, Jasprit Bumrah 4-0-35-0, Shardul Thakur 4-0-39-3, Mayank Markande 1-0-16-0.

MI: Ryan Rickelton run out (Roy) 81, Rohit Sharma c Roy b Arora 78, Suryakumar Yadav c Rinku b Tyagi 16, Tilak Varma c sub (Pandey) b Narine 20, Hardik Pandya not out 18, Naman Dhir not out 5. **Extras** (LB-2, NB-1, W-3) 6
Total: (For four wickets, 19.1 overs 224).
Fall-of-wickets: 1-148, 2-179, 3-184, 4-215
Bowling: Vaibhav Arora 4-0-52-1, Blessing Muzarabani 3-0-34-0, Varun Chakravarthy 4-0-48-0, Kartik Tyagi 4-0-43-1, Sunil Narine 3-0-30-1, Anukul Roy 1.1-0-15-0.

Result: MI won by six wickets.
Player-of-the-Match: Shardul Thakur

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After reset, RR and CSK eye revival

Sourav.M@timesofindia.com

Guwahati: With Rajasthan Royals hosting a few Indian Premier League matches in their adopted home of Guwahati over the past seasons, top-flight cricket is no novelty to the Assam capital. But with an additional fixture scheduled at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium this year — amid the buzz of the April 9 state assembly elections — the excitement has risen quite a few notches.

As fans gear up for the Royals' clash with Super Kings on Monday, weather remains the only concern. Intermittent drizzle over the past week and forecasts of rain and thunderstorms on match day threaten to disrupt proceedings.

On the field, both teams are desperate for a reset after disappointing IPL 2025 campaigns. Chennai Super Kings finished at the bottom of the table for the first time in their history, while Rajasthan Royals ended just above them.

Samson swaps pink for yellow

Sanju Samson will be the biggest attraction, arriving in Guwahati on the back of a stellar T20 World Cup-winning campaign with India. The Kerala wicketkeeper-batter will now turn out for Chennai Super Kings against Rajasthan Royals — a franchise he represented and led for over a decade.

Young India U19 World Cup-winning captain Ayush Mhatre adds firepower to the top-order for CSK, while Shivam Dube will look to carry his T20 World Cup form into the IPL and add muscle to the middle. Matt Henry, Khaleel Ahmed and Noor Ahmad form the bowling core.

Riyan Parag begins his first full season as Rajasthan Royals captain after handling leadership duties briefly last year during Samson's injury-forced absence. The Assam all-rounder now shoulders the responsibility of leading a franchise seeking a fresh identity.

Ravindra Jadeja, part of the Samson swap deal, will don pink this season and spearhead the spin attack alongside Ravi Bishnoi, while Jofra Archer leads the pace unit. With Yashasvi Jaiswal, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Shimron Hetmyer and Dhruv Jurel forming the batting core, Royals will hope for a more consistent showing.

WEATHER
21°C

NUMBERS GAME

6 Rajasthan Royals have won six out of the last seven games against Chennai Super Kings between Oct 2021 and May 2025. Their only defeat was by five wickets at Chepauk on May 12, 2024.

No rust, only runs as Kohli resumes in style

Seasoned Star Seamlessly Shifts From ODI Rhythm To T20 Tempo

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Bengaluru: Since anchoring Royal Challengers Bengaluru's maiden IPL title run last season, Virat Kohli has been in top form. Across nine ODIs and two Vijay Hazare Trophy matches, he has amassed 821 runs. Following back-to-back ducks in Australia, Kohli responded emphatically — his lowest score since has been 23, against New Zealand in Rajkot.

In an era of packed schedules, Kohli turned into a one-format (ODI) international player last year. But on Saturday night, returning to T20 cricket at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium for the first time since last season's final, there was no hint of rust.

T20 BASH

If anything, the 37-year-old looked like he had simply carried forward his rhythm from his last outing — a composed 124 against New Zealand on Jan 18.

Kohli's unbeaten 69 off 38 balls guided RCB to a six-wicket win over Sunrisers Hyderabad and was a study in controlled aggression. He got going with a boundary off Jaydev Unadkat through mid-off and built his innings methodically, choosing his moments to attack.

At the post-match press conference, skipper Rajat Patidar hailed Kohli as the "number one chase master."

Kohli, who top-scored with a 35-ball 43 in the 2025 final against Punjab Kings, credited his recent ODI run and preparation behind the scenes for the seamless transition.

VIRAT KOHLI

Syed Asif

"The way I batted in the One-Day series recently helped me to stay in that same kind of momentum. I've put enough work physically behind the scenes with my fitness. I knew as long as I had the rhythm, things should come together nicely," said Kohli, who was RCB's best batter with 657 runs in the previous season, at the post-match presentation.

He also underlined the value of stepping away from the game intermittently. "The kind of scheduling that we've had over the last 15 years and the amount of cricket I've played, for me, there was always a risk of getting burnt out rather than being undercooked. So these breaks helped me immensely. I stay fresh and excited. Whenever I come back to play, it's 120%. I'm not coming back underprepared. In fact, the extra rest helps me freshen up mentally," the opener said.

Fitness, he added, remains central to sustaining performance.

> "IT'S ALMOST LIKE HE'S PUTTING ON A SHOW FOR PEOPLE TO SEE HOW THE GAME SHOULD BE PLAYED, PLAY IT HARD AND PLAY IT THE WAY IT'S MEANT TO BE PLAYED. THAT STOOD OUT FOR ME."
> —R Ashwin

"As long as you're physically fit and you're excited mentally, things come together nicely and then you're able to contribute to the team's cause."

Despite his stature, Kohli insisted he isn't taking his place for granted. "You don't want to hold on to a spot. You want to keep performing and keep putting in the work for the team," Kohli, who was dropped on 29 by Heinrich Klaasen off Harshal Patel's bowling, added.

PADIKKAL'S FITNESS

The defining phase of RCB's chase was Kohli's 101-run partnership with southpaw Devdutt Padikkal. For much of their stand, Kohli rotated strike, allowing the left-hander to dictate terms.

The new Karnataka captain's fluency prompted Kohli to recalibrate his approach.

"I had plans of going aggressive in the powerplay, but when I saw him play, I was like, keep putting him back on strike and hit the odd boundary. He completely took the game away from the opposition. His head positions and his balance are absolutely world-class," Kohli said.

Duffy's red-hot show on debut

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Bengaluru: When Abhishek Sharma went down on one knee and sliced Jacob Duffy over deep backward point off the very first over, a sense of deja vu would have been understandable for the Royal Challengers Bengaluru debutant. Memories of the hammering he took from the same batter in the T20 World Cup final could easily have resurfaced.

At the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad last month, Abhishek — then struggling for consistency — had found his rhythm against the 31-year-old New Zealand quick. Of his 52 off 21 balls that night, 29 runs came off Duffy, including 20 in a single over.

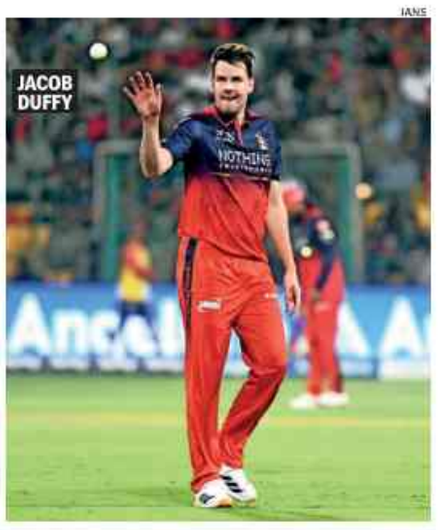
But Saturday night told a very different story. "I'm sick of bowling to Abhishek," Duffy joked later. Yet it took him just six deliveries this time to send the Sunrisers Hyderabad opener back to the dugout.

Regarded as one of New Zealand's most reliable all-format quicks, Duffy struck early to remove Abhishek in the powerplay, setting the tone for the defending champions' comfortable win.

In the absence of RCB spearhead Josh Hazlewood, Duffy made himself at home at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. His disciplined use of short balls, hard lengths and tight lines stood out. He cramped left-handers Abhishek and Travis Head for room, while Nitish Reddy struggled against the well-directed short deliveries.

The New Zealander, who recently swept the bowling honours at his country's annual cricket awards, was understandably pleased with his opening spell.

"Great win. Hell of a way to start the campaign," he said after being named player of the match for his figures of 3 for 22.



JACOB DUFFY

IANS

Duffy credited valuable practice time ahead of the season, along with inputs from Hazlewood — who has enjoyed considerable success at this venue — for his performance.

RCB skipper Rajat Patidar revealed that Hazlewood, still recovering from injury, spent time with the bowlers analysing the surface and sharing insights. Duffy put that guidance to good use during his 42-minute spell before being replaced by Impact Player Devdutt Padikkal.

Bought at his base price of Rs 2 crore at the mini-auction, Duffy showed he could be a like-for-like fit for Hazlewood. Though he downplayed expectations — "I'm just keeping the big fellow's (Hazlewood's) seat warm" — his command over conditions on Saturday night suggests RCB may have found more than just a stop-gap option.

Different time controls add tinge of spice

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Pune: The Candidates chess tournament, which started in Cyprus on Sunday, has taken care that the men won't lose on time. But only after the 41st move.

Until that point, they may suffer as the principle of legendary Bobby Fischer is unCANDIDATES EVENT followed, with a view to generate excitement arising out of a time scramble.

In contrast, the women's candidates, which will be played concurrently in the same hall, will have increment of 30 seconds from the first move. But they get only 90 minutes for the first 40 moves while men get 120 minutes for the first 40 moves.

INSPIRATION: A young fan seeks chess ace Vishwanathan Anand's autograph in Cyprus on Sunday

GM Swapnil Dhopade, one of the popular chess trainers in India, said, "They want to create some excitement. Especially when players are reaching move 40 and there is no increment of the clock. If one player is under time pressure then it is exciting to see whether the player completes 40 moves in a few seconds remaining without blundering anything. The time control in the open is an experiment to make chess more and more exciting!"

The variation in time control for men and women was there during the 2024 Candidates too.

Fischer invented his version of the digital clock which provided an option of increment per move made. The idea was to ensure that a player whose position is better on the board would be punished with a loss only if he continues to play below-par moves.

The principle of "lost on time" assumes that a player in better position will play moves favourable for his opponent and to his own detriment. The principle doesn't apply if the opponent has no pawn or winning material remaining on the board. In such a case, the clock turning zero results in a draw.

IM, author and trainer V Saravanan said, "Different time control for different sections is indeed strange. FIDE might have done it after consultation with the participants. If not, it is a strange set-up." former national champion Praveen Thipsay dubbed the decision ridiculous.

When argued that in practical terms men are getting 10 minutes more (120) than women's 110 (with increment) for the first 40 moves, Thipsay differed. "Increment can't be compared with time on hand," he said. "Actually FIDE had missed out the actual purpose of increments. The only purpose of the increment is to ensure that players don't lose on time just because they are physically unable to complete the moves."

Pragg takes Giri in his stride

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Nagpur: Playing at an accuracy level of as high as 99% for almost five hours, gave Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu a winning start in his second Candidates appearance. In the opening round, Pragg placed his pawns and pieces with perfection to prevail over experiCHESS enced Dutch GM Anish Giri in Cyprus on Sunday.

In the 5-hour, 20-minute contest, Pragg picked the Grand Prix variation of the Closed Sicilian defence, utilized the two minor errors from Giri to open his Candidates campaign with a perfect score. The 51-move contest saw the 2741 Elo Pragg eventually playing at an accuracy level of 97.3%, making most of an extra pawn to force higher-ranked Giri to resign.

On the 29th turn, when Pragg placed his rook in the attacking line and brought his bishop to guard his king, Viswanathan Anand termed that move "genius" while analysing the game, and from that position the world No.13 strengthened his grip on the game.

Earlier, on their Candidates debut, the 20-year-old World Cup winners Divya Deshmukh and Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan continued their impressive run. While Sindarov survived a wild mutual time scramble to outplay Russia's Andrey Esipenko in 41 moves, Divya started her campaign with a draw. Divya held Ukraine's most experienced and higher-ranked Anna Muzychuk to a 35-move draw. Divya chose the Scotch opening and had the upper hand on the clock.

A 20th-move attacking move, which eventually became the only error by Divya, gave 2522 Elo Muzychuk a chance to bring parity. By the 26th move, Muzychuk and Divya came almost at par on time, and Anand felt the Indian girl was in danger.

Divya, however, took nine minutes to advance her rook with an excellent 27th move to take the safest route. When Divya realized that the advantage of winning was lost, she took no time to split the points by repetition.

SNAP SHOTS

Mary ponders turning pro

Olympic bronze medallist and six-time world champion Indian boxer MC Mary Kom on Sunday said she is considering a move into professional boxing. The 43-year-old is past the age eligibility to compete on the amateur circuit. "I reached a stage where age restrictions prevented me from competing further in amateur boxing for the country, a new opportunity has surfaced in Professional Boxing," she said.

Spurs interim boss Tudor leaves: Tottenham Hotspur's interim manager Igor Tudor left the club on Sunday after the Premier League side said they had "mutually agreed" to part ways. Tudor was appointed interim manager until the end of the season after Spurs sacked Thomas Frank in Feb. "We can confirm that it has been mutually agreed for Head Coach Igor Tudor to leave the Club with immediate effect," Spurs said in a statement.

Zubimendi released from Spain squad: Spain released Arsenal midfielder Martin Zubimendi from their squad on Sunday because of knee discomfort. "To avoid any risk whatsoever and safeguard the player's health, he has been released from the squad," said the Euro 2024 winners in a statement.

Eight players leave England camp: England boss Thomas Tuchel will have no choice but to ring the changes ahead of Tuesday's friendly with Japan at Wembley Stadium after eight players left the camp with a variety of health issues and injury concerns. Goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale, Fikayo Tomori and Dominic Calvert-Lewin are among the departures, with defender John Stones returning after picking up an injury prior to Friday's game, while Adam Wharton and Noni Madueke were both injured in the friendly.

Romania coach Lucescu hospitalised: Romania coach Mircea Lucescu has been hospitalised after falling sick during a meeting before a training session, effectively ruling him out of their trip to Slovakia for a friendly, the Romanian Football Federation (FRF) said on Sunday. The 80-year-old was given first aid by the national team's medical staff before emergency service crews helped stabilize him, the FRF said in a statement.

76ers fend off Hornets: Joel Embiid had 29 points and made a big block in the final seconds as the Philadelphia 76ers rallied from 15 points down to edge the host Charlotte Hornets 118-114 on Saturday.

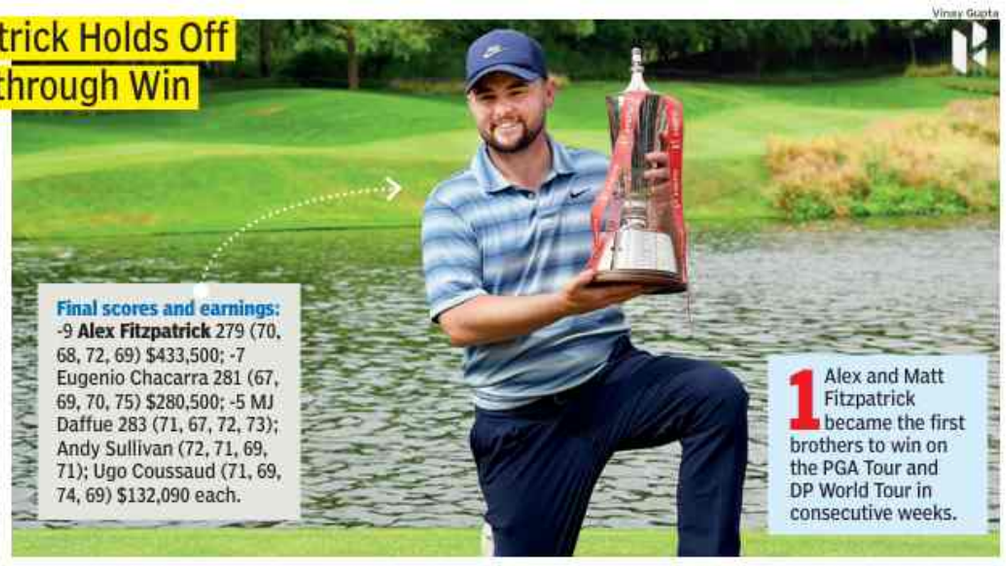
Results: San Antonio 127 bt Milwaukee 95; Detroit 109 bt Minnesota 87; Philadelphia 118 bt Charlotte 114; Atlanta 123 bt Sacramento 113; Memphis 125 bt Chicago 124; Phoenix 134 bt Utah 109.

Mayweather-Pacquiao rematch is an exhibition: Floyd Mayweather's scheduled rematch with Manny Pacquiao will be an exhibition fight, with the venue for the bout yet to be nailed down, the former multiweight world champion said. Mayweather told Vegas Sports Today: "As of right now, we don't know exactly where the fight is going to be at. And this is not actually a fight, it's an exhibition."

ALEX COMES OF AGE

Indian Open: Fitzpatrick Holds Off Chacarra For Breakthrough Win

Moushumi.Bora@timesofindia.com


Vinay Gupta

Final scores and earnings: -9 **Alex Fitzpatrick** 279 (70, 68, 72, 69) $433,500; -7 Eugenio Chacarra 281 (67, 69, 70, 75) $280,500; -5 MJ Daffue 283 (71, 67, 72, 73); Andy Sullivan (72, 71, 69, 71); Ugo Coussaud (71, 69, 74, 69) $132,090 each.

1 Alex and Matt Fitzpatrick became the first brothers to win on the PGA Tour and DP World Tour in consecutive weeks.

Gurugram: Let us first praise the Spaniard for whom it was not meant to be. For a while, it was deja vu with Eugenio Chacarra, Hero Indian Open winner last year, in combat mode, recovering from every backward step to take the turn three strokes ahead of the chasing pack. He already knew the DLF G&CC's final treacherous stretch would require precision, focus, and a rub of the greens for him to celebrate a rare double.

And then, golf hit its refresh button. It wanted a new story, a new hero, a new life to change.

Alex Fitzpatrick emerged from the shadows with a putting masterclass in the $2.55 million event while the favourite Madrid man faltered. It was a final-day three-over for the 26-year-old, who resigned to fate after his late aggression left a trail of errors. And a three-under for the understated Englishman, who pushed on smartly, trembling a bit, until the final release of emotions on the 18th. A day earlier, Fitzpatrick turned in a fighting even-par card to stay within four strokes of the leader, and dwelled on topics much more important than golf. Like the value of a close-knit family. Alex's more illustrious older brother Matt, the 2022 US Open champion, who won the Valspar Championship on the PGA Tour last week, had always been a hard act to follow. On Sunday, the 27-year-old stepped into his own.

With Alex's maiden DP World triumph, the Fitzpatricks became the first pair of brothers to win on both tours in successive weeks. "It can be hard sometimes when you're constantly chasing someone's accolades but luckily it's my brother. I idolise him so just trying to be like him in every way," said the Sheffield native.

It has been a hard slog. This season also, his results traced a gradual climb, with a missed cut, then a tie for 23rd, 14th, sixth before resolving into a win.

The final day, and the final holes at DLF, had altered many scripts. With three consecutive birdies, Fitzpatrick caught up with Chacarra on the 13th, only for the Spaniard to nose ahead with his reply.

The gauntlet was thrown. A par for a par on the notorious 14th; then, the 15th threw a spanner in the works, or maybe an iron. There was a two-stroke swing as the Englishman took the lead with his birdie as the Spaniard two-putted for a bogey. Chacarra's game unravelled, and Fitzpatrick had the luxury of a double bogey on the 18th, a tap-in to win by two strokes. "I'm proud of you," shouted his caddie, as the champion buried his face in his palms in disbelief.

There was Moet & Chandon champagne sprayed by his Tour mates. As he gathered his breath, he was asked how he was going to celebrate. "With a can of Coca-Cola," he smiled.

Teenager Manoj best Indian

Teenager Manoj S. emerged as the top Indian, finishing tied for 43rd at 10-over with OP Chouhan. Manoj secured the honour based on a superior final-round score.

My Open ended early, the Masters now beckon

Akshay Bhatia

As a professional golfer it is never a good feeling to have the weekend off. It's what we play for and hope to hold aloft the silverware on Sunday. For me that would have been the heady feeling, especially on my maiden trip for the Hero Indian Open, my sponsor and in a country where my parents grew up. Sadly, it was not to be.

As I head home and prepare for the Masters at the Augusta National, I wish to congratulate Alex Fitzpatrick on his wonderful win. It was awesome he way he kept going despite being four shots behind after three rounds.

This is not an easy course and to win here is indeed an honour. I am sure there are many more great results ahead of Alex in the near future. I have seen his brother, Matt, on the PGA and I have no doubts that Alex will also soon be on the PGA Tour.

Eugenio Chacarra, another solid player, came close to successfully defending his Hero Indian Open title. Despite an early exit, it was a superb trip. It was a long-cherished dream to visit India. Now that I have done it, I want to come back again to win the Hero Indian Open.

(Akshay Bhatia, a Hero MotoCorp Global Brand Ambassador, played his maiden Hero Indian Open)

Hero

Woods faces uncertain future

Stuart (USA): Tiger Woods faces an uncertain future after being released on bail following his arrest on suspicion of DUI after a high-speed crash in Florida. He faces charges including driving while intoxicated, property damage and refusal to undergo a urine test.

The incident comes at a crucial time, with his potential role as Ryder Cup captain and involvement in PGA Tour decisions is under question. Woods now sees his immediate golfing plans and administrative roles put on hold as investigations continue. His participation in upcoming events, including the Masters, now appears increasingly doubtful. AGENCIES

Antonelli rewrites record books

Suzuka (Japan): Mercedes driver Kimi Antonelli won the Japanese Grand Prix on Sunday to clinch his second straight Formula One victory and become the youngest-ever championship leader at the age of 19.

The Italian, who had started from pole but quickly dropped back to sixth, crossed the line 13.7 seconds clear of McLaren's Oscar Piastri with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc completing the podium.

JAPANESE GP

His Mercedes teammate George Russell crossed the line fourth with world champion Lando Norris fifth in the other McLaren ahead of Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton.

Antonelli's win at Suzuka came on the heels of his victory in China and gave him a nine-point lead over Russell in the overall standings. It also made him the first Italian to win two F1 races in a row since Alberto Ascari in 1953.

Reuters

TEEN STAR: Kimi Antonelli

Antonelli inherited the lead when his rivals, including teammate Russell, pitted for fresh tyres shortly before a heavy crash by Haas racer Oliver Bearman triggered a safety car. That gave Antonelli the chance to pit and keep the lead, leaving Russell, who had stopped just a lap earlier, cursing his luck.

"I was lucky with the safety car but the pace was unbelievable in the end," said Antonelli on the team radio. "We definitely dodged a bullet today," his race engineer responded.

Bearman was given the all-clear by doctors after limping away from the high-speed crash, which came after he closed rapidly on Franco Colapinto's Alpine and went onto the grass before sliding into the barriers hard. He was given an X-ray at the circuit's medical center which revealed a right knee contusion but no fractures, a Haas spokesperson said.

Norris also pitted under the safety car to move up to third but he was unable to hang on to the podium spot.

Pierre Gasly was seventh for Alpine while Red Bull's four-times world champion Max Verstappen salvaged some points in eighth.

Liam Lawson was ninth for Racing Bulls with Esteban Ocon 10th in his Haas. REUTERS

Sabalenka completes 'Sunshine Double'

Edges Past Coco Gauff To Wear Miami Crown

Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka beat hometown favourite Coco Gauff 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 in the Miami Open final on Saturday to join an exclusive club by completing the coveted 'Sunshine Double'. World number one Sabalenka, who reached the final without dropping a set, won 73% of her first-serve points and faced just two break points en route to victory in a rematch of the 2025 French Open final won by Gauff.

TENNIS

Sabalenka is only the fifth woman to win the Indian Wells and Miami titles back-to-back, a feat known as the 'Sunshine Double' given the tournaments' respective locations in California and Florida. "I want to start with (Coco). You're a fighter and you also push me so hard to be a better player and I like our rivalry," Sabalenka, who improved to 7-6 all-time versus Gauff, said during the trophy ceremony.

AFP

CHAMPION: Aryna Sabalenka

Sabalenka raced out to a 2-0 lead but Gauff got on the board with a love hold and then repelled three break points in her next service game to get within 3-2. But Sabalenka did not lose focus and eventually went up a double break on the world number four before closing out a dominant opening on her serve.

There was very little to separate the two players in the middle set which remained on serve until Gauff broke Sabalenka for the only time in the match to force a third set. Sabalenka broke Gauff to open the decider, held at love in two consecutive service games to go 5-3 up and then sealed the victory with her fourth break of the match when Gauff sent a backhand wide.

Sabalenka is the first player to win back-to-back Miami titles since Ashleigh Barty in 2019 and 2021. The 2020 edition was cancelled due to COVID-19. The Belarusian joins Iga Swiatek (2022), Victoria Azarenka (2016), Kim Clijsters (2005) and Steffi Graf (1994, 1996) as the only women to complete the 'Sunshine Double'.

Sabalenka also improved to 23-1 on the year, her only loss coming in the Australian Open final at the hands of Elena Rybakina, whom she went on to beat in the Indian Wells final and Miami semifinals.

Result: Final: 1-Aryna Sabalenka (Blr) bt 4-Coco Gauff (USA) 6-2, 4-6, 6-3. AGENCIES

Advani marches into semis

Seasoned cueist **Pankaj Advani** of PSPB outclassed Piyush Kushwaha to power into the semifinal of the 9-ball Pool National Championships in Ludhiana on Sunday. The multiple-time orld champion scored a lop-

POOL NATIONALS

sided 9-3 win over the Madhya Pradesh player and set up a meeting with the winner of the match between Kushal C and Kamal Chawla.

The other semifinal will be played between Nitin Sharma and S Shrikrishna. While Chandigarh's Nitin scored a 9-6 win over Shoaib Khan of Delhi, Shrikrishna toyed with Sumit Talwar of Chandigarh 9-3.

Earlier in the pre-quarterfinals, Advani stunned 10-ball pool champion and favourite Shivam Arora without breaking a sweat at 8-2.

Results: Quarterfinals: Nitin Sharma (Chd) bt Shoaib Khan (Del) 9-6; Pankaj Advani bt Piyush Kushwaha (MP) 9-3; S Shrikrishna (PSPB) bt Sumit Talwar (Chd) 9-3. **Pre-quarters:** Advani bt Shivam Arora (Mah) 8-2; Kushal C (Kar) bt Gagandeep Makkar (Chd) 8-4; Kamal Chawla (RSPB) bt Shabaz Adil Khan (PSPB) 8-6; Kushwaha bt Rovin D'Souza (RSPB) 8-2; Nitin bt Abhijeet Ranade (Mah) 8-1; Shoaib bt Shoaib Khan (RSPB) 8-6; Shrikrishna bt Anuj Uppal (Del) 8-1; Talwar bt Faisal Khan (RSPB) 8-6. TNN

Kiran & Dishanth power Hassan to victory

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hassan registered a 42-33 win over Bangalore South in a boys' league match of the State junior basketball championship in Bengaluru on Sunday. At the Sree Kanteerava Stadium courts, Hassan, who held a narrow 28-21 lead at halftime, rode on Kiran (21) and Dishanth's (15) top efforts to outplay their opposition. In a girls' league match, Dharwad-B handed Kolar a 36-18 defeat.

BASKETBALL

Results: Boys: Hassan Dist 42 (Kiran 21, Dishanth 15) bt Bangalore South Dist 33 (Sacheth 11, Niranjan 8) HT 28-21; Kolar Dist 76 (Gagan 25) bt Bagalkot Dist 26 (Nandish 11) HT 47-19; Davanagere Dist 49 (Samarath Gowda 17, Harshil 14) bt Bellary Dist 44 (Nitin 19) HT 30-25; Mysuru Dist-B 75 (Renish 23, Achutha 15) bt Hassan Dist 56 (Dishanth 35, Kiran 11) HT 34-37; Dharwad Dist- A 94 (Ramesh 22) bt Bellary Dist 8 (Ujwal 3) HT 61-6.

Girls: Vijayapura Dist 56 bt Bangalore South Dist 4 (Sanjana 2) HT 35-2; Dharwad Dist-B 36 (Samruddhi 10) bt Kolar Dist 18 (Jayashree 11) HT 26-3; Dharwad Dist-A 35 (Aishwarya 12, Amruta 11) bt Bangalore South Dist 6 (Galina 2) HT 21-4.

Rampant Belgium cruise past US

The United States were routed 5-2 by Belgium on Saturday in a humbling defeat for Mauricio Pochettino's team as they prepare to co-host this summer's World Cup. The thrashing comes as a wakeup call just 75 days before the tournament for the Americans, who after a good run of recent results were found severely lacking once again when facing top European opposition.

FOOTBALL

The US took an early lead against the world's ninth-ranked team, with Weston McKennie slotting in to the delight of a packed 67,000 Atlanta crowd. But the Americans, knowing that their chances of making a deep run in the World Cup will likely depend on beating elite European opposition, saw any hopes of a statement victory dashed.

Having conceded, the Belgians swiftly came to life, with a deluge of goals from Zeno Debast, Amadou Onana, and Charles De Ketelaere, and a brace from substitute Dodi Lukebakio. Patrick Agyemang grabbed a late consolation for the US, who play Portugal in another high-profile friendly Tuesday before Pochettino announces his final squad in May.

Reuters

ECSTATIC: Dodi Lukebakio (right) celebrates with Jeremy Doku

MEXICO, PORTUGAL PLAY OUT DRAW

Mexico and Portugal played out a 0-0 draw at the Estadio Azteca on Saturday in a friendly to mark the stadium's reopening ahead of the World Cup.

Portugal's Joao Felix went close in the 14th minute before Goncalo Ramos struck the post midway through the first half. The visitors continued to look the more dangerous side after the break, with Bruno Fernandes firing just wide. Tensions briefly flared between Pedro Neto and Jesus Gallardo, while the introduction of Toluca's Portuguese striker Paulinho was met with loud cheers from the home crowd. Mexico almost claimed a late winner through substitute Armando Gonzalez but the forward's header went wide.

JAPAN STRIKE LATE

Scotland's first outing since ending a 28-year wait to qualify for the World Cup ended in defeat as Junya Ito's late strike helped Japan clinch a 1-0 victory at Hampden Park. AGENCIES

AIFF to decide on bids after evaluation

Panaji: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has asked accounting firm KPMG to "prepare comprehensive comparison tables evaluating the feasibility and key aspects of the two bids" for the ISL and Federation Cup, the two most important domestic men's football competitions, reports **Marcus Mergulhao**.

According to sources, purely on numbers, AIFF is in favour of Genius Sports' bid that totals approximately Rs 2,130 crore for commercial rights of the two competitions, for the next 20 years. The second bid of Rs 36.6 crore is from FanCode. "The executive committee members were happy with the three bids (including one from Capri Sports for women's football competitions) and we've informed them that it's better to send it to the general body for approval," AIFF deputy secretary general M Satyanarayan told **TOI**. TNN

Dutee, who once fought the gender rule, feels the hit

Indian Who Won Landmark CAS Verdict, Saddened By IOC's Gene Test

Sudeshna.Ghosh @timesofindia.com

Kolkata: Over a decade back, she fought against a draconian rule of the IAAF, the current World Athletics, that was not validated by science and the Olympic tenet of inclusivity, and came out a winner in the Court of Arbitration of Sports. Dutee Chand instantly became

IN FOCUS

a worldwide symbol of victory for women athletes and those with hyperandrogenism.

This week, however, when the International Olympic Committee reintroduced a similar rule of exclusion, establishing mandatory gender tests from the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics onwards, it invalidated the Indian sprinter Dutee Chand's landmark victory at sport's highest court in Lausanne in 2015.

Getty Images

TOUGH TIMES: Dutee Chand

"The fight I waged was not for my own sake alone; I fought on behalf of all women. I raised my voice to become a collective voice for others," the two-time Olympian and 100m national record holder told TOI, the pain and frustration evident in her voice.

"I did not fight merely out of a personal grievance, but rather for the sake of society as a whole. Across the entire nation, there are individuals with naturally elevated hormone levels; it was for their rights that I fought, and in that struggle, we were victorious. At that time, I even succeeded in getting the rule revoked; yet, now they are re-imposing it. I simply cannot comprehend the logic behind this," Dutee lamented.

This has been a particularly disappointing week for Dutee. In India, Parliament passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, which amends the 2019 Act by removing the right to self-perceived gender identity and replacing it with a medical board certification process.

She reiterated the growing intolerance towards transgender people and expressed her frustration at the new Bill. "I felt deeply saddened to hear about this — to see such actions being taken, especially in a nation where everyone has the right to vote. In a democracy, rights should extend to everyone. To raise objections based on someone's gender and to deprive them of their fundamental rights does not seem right to me at all.

"Everyone has the right to live. Everyone has the right to find happiness in their life. Yet, by doing this, you are effectively crushing someone's happiness," said Dutee, India's first openly gay athlete.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) mandated that only biological female athletes, whose gender has been determined by a one-time gene-screening test, will now be eligible to take part in female category events at the Olympic Games.

IOC president Kirsty Coventry's announcement that all athletes wanting to qualify or take part in female category events from the 2028 Games onwards will have to undergo an SRY gene test to determine their eligibility has been met with objection from human rights groups. The new policy — following an 18-month consultation phase — essentially stops transgender athletes from competing in female category events at the Olympics.

They had previously been eligible to compete at the Olympics once cleared by their respective federations.

"This rule actually existed before, and there had already been a struggle against it," said Dutee, who had been dropped from the 2014 Commonwealth Games squad by Athletics Federation of India, and banned from competing as a female athlete, citing high naturally occurring testosterone levels or hyperandrogenism.

Semenya criticizes IOC chief Coventry

Cape Town: Two-time Olympic champion runner Caster Semenya on Sunday expressed her disappointment with International Committee president Kirsty Coventry over the decision to ban transgender athletes from competing at the Olympics.

Semenya, who is South African, said she expected more from a woman leader like Coventry, who is from Zimbabwe and a fellow African. "Personally, for her as a leader, she's an African, I'm sure she understands how, you know, we as Africans, we are coming from, as a global South, you know, you cannot control genetics," Semenya said.

"For me personally, I'll say the voice is not heard because you taking it as a tick box, you ticking a box so you can go clarify or say yes we've consulted," she said. "For me, it's you ticking the box." AP

Your Unforgettable fancied for feature

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Pradeep Chouhan-trained Your Unforgettable is fancied to win the Cursetjee Dhunjishaw Salver over 1400 metres, the feature at the races on Monday. First race at 4.30 pm.

SELECTIONS: 1. Brave Hunter Plate 1600M: Flash Mob 1, Mighty Hero 2 **2. Western India Race Horse Owners' Association Trophy 2000M:** Caccini 1, Looking Like A Wow 2 **3. Blue Pencil Plate 1000M:** Dreams Come True 1, Lucky Diamond 2 **4. Amber Flash Plate 1600M:** Incredible Luck 1, Shaandar 2 **5. Cursetjee Dhunjishaw Salver 1400M:** Your Unforgettable 1, Ardakan 2 **6. Busy Lizzie Plate 1100M:** Ensky 1, Key West 2 **7. Secret Treasure Plate 1200M:** Neutralist 1, Charlie Brown 2

Day's best: Your Unforgettable

Jaandaar romps to victory: Pesi Shroff-trained Jaandaar— ridden by Vivek G—, won The Jimmy Bharucha Salver, the feature event of the Mumbai races on Sunday.

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Mercedes driver Kimi Antonelli, 19, wins Japanese GP to clinch his 2nd straight F1 win and becomes the sport's youngest-ever championship leader

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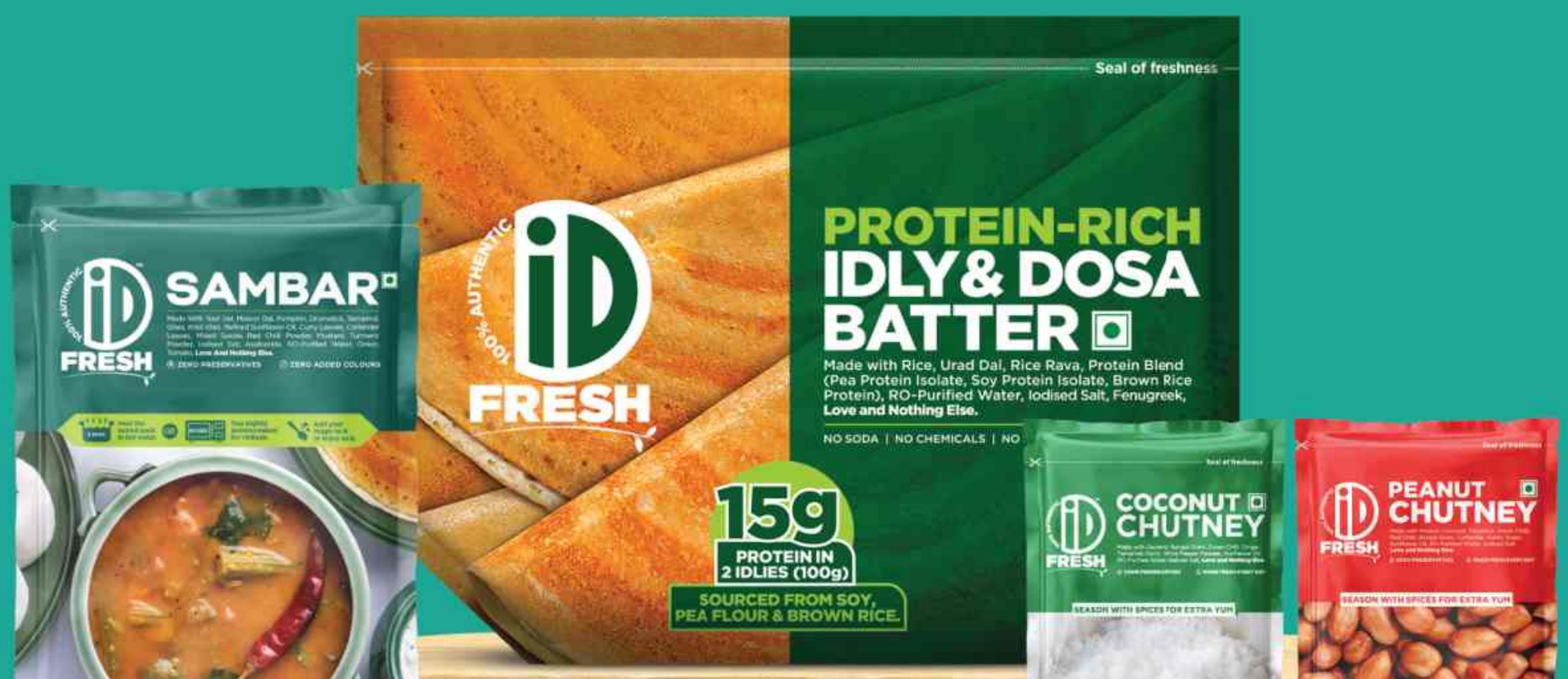
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